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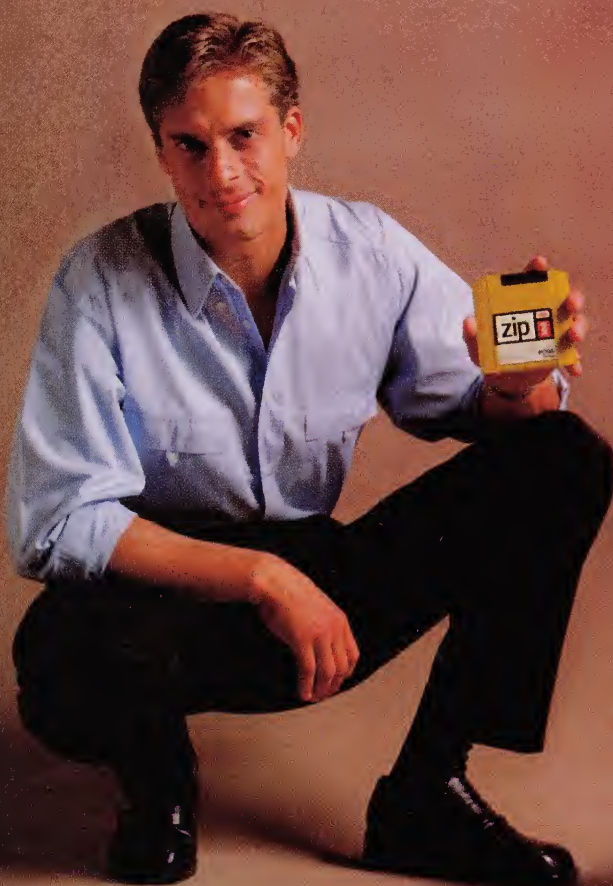


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What we're playing: Powerslide, Colin
 McRae Rally, MOO2, Commandos,
 FIFA World Cup 98, Final Fantasy VII,
 Starcraft, Unreal, Gran Turismo,
 Resident Evil 2

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Australian eh? So what?



Ever wondered what the tag "The Australian PC Entertainment Magazine" on the PC PowerPlay cover actually means? Surely the Australian games industry isn't big enough to warrant a magazine all of its own - and why would anyone want to buy a locally produced games mag, when the overseas games mags

would have all the hot scoops first?

Easy. The above statements are complete crap, I'm delighted to say. In the case of the latter, the reviews, news and technical reports in PC PowerPlay appear a couple of months before any of the overseas mags via the miracle of local printing vs. import delays. In any case, we have six game journalists located in the world's gaming hotspots, all working tirelessly to keep you totally up on what's happening. We can thanks the miracle of digital communications for their timely and pertinent reporting.

Then there's the Australian game scene. We get a bit enthusiastic when Australian-made games look like they can cut it globally, but generally and dismally, this doesn't happen too often. Stand proud, patriots, for we've got another winner on our hands! It's called Powerslide, it's being developed by Emergent in Adelaide and it was, for me, quite easily the most impressive new game at this year's E3.

Besides being the fastest 3Dfx engine in the world (true!), Powerslide feels just incredible to drive. Emergent call it an arcade game, but I'll assume they're talking about the quality of the graphics (they're wrong - no arcade game has ever looked as good as this!). To drive Powerslide is to experience the true feeling of driving. These cars are true 3D objects with independent suspension. Like no other driving game, you really feel the mass and momentum of the car as it obeys not a programmer's nearest approximation of the laws of physics, but the real thing. It's not scarily

hard either, perhaps like TOCA can be, but is intuitive and natural.

I'm raving, so I'll stop now. I just love it when a game appears that is truly new and exciting. That it's Australian shouldn't be remarkable, we've made world class games before and Powerslide is just another in a growing list. Powerslide will be previewed in detail next issue, look for a sneak-peek in the E3 report and watch out for a demo on the cover CD Real Soon Now.

Ben Mansill Editor



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Warm and kindly guidance for getting the most out of the PCPP CD.

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Unreal's shockwave felt throughout the industry, Activision blesses their gifted and sends them forth to prosper, Blizzard decide, remarkably, to stick to strategy games, NZ continues to fornicate with its games industry, Spec Ops officially a dud and more juice from the coalface.

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Be a full card-carrying (card not included) member of Club PowerPlay. Be in the running to win a thumping Altec Lansing speaker system.



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First there was 'Blaster' then 'Monster', now 'Maxi' is here for your multimedia dollars, 3D glasses and it's not VR, Yamaha pumps up the volume plus Saitek's slightly useful Dash.

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We examine the big name boxes and assess their game-worthiness. Beware the name 'Multimedia', for it may not be what you expect or want.



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Doom in the modern age

36



And you thought the Quake hackers were hardcore... Doom is being modernised with full 3D accelerator support! Here's the feature, the files are on the CD. Good eh?

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Like the State of the Nation, but with games. All the latest in your favourite genre.



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Electronic Entertainment Expo

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Like Lemmings to a cliff, the games biz all meet up once a year to show off their wares and check out the opposition. It's also an excellent way to foresee the year ahead in games. We were there, here's what we remembered.

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Johnny Herbert's Grand Prix

Thunderboats

Fallout 2

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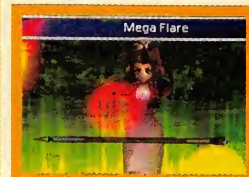
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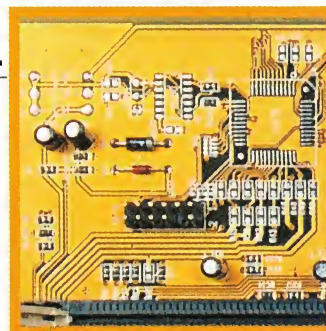
The latest silicon news. This month, Intel's i740 3D accelerator under the microscope.



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Speed your PC up completely for free! Great news! Oh, it may melt your shiny new Pentium...



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Who needs a life when you've got a PC and a cat? For like minded souls, here's a guide to getting together and getting it on.

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PowerPlay readers get it off their chests in the only public forum that takes them seriously.

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Win a year on Wireplay plus cool games! Fantastic!

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Public apology: It took us 2 years to think of doing the classic game Flashback, in Flashback. We are stupid and a bit slow. Next month we'll start a whole new section looking back at ancient game classics, it'll be called Total Annihilation.

CD GUIDE

12 Demos including Forsaken and Quest for Glory 5

Starting the PC PowerPlay CD

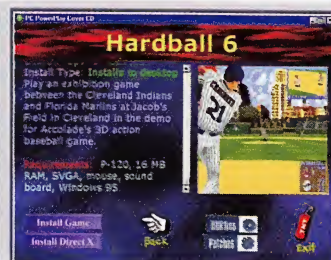
Welcome to the new PC PowerPlay CD Interface. We have done away with fancy over the top browser-based menus to bring you a simple and easy to use interface. Insert the CD into the CDROM drive and let Autoplay start it, or click on the RUNME file if your PC doesn't support Autoplay.

The Old and the New menus

When the interface appears you have two menu options - the Old Menu or the New one. Selecting the Old Menu interface takes you to the screen you have already become accustomed to. Use this if you happen to come across any problems with the new interface. However, we are confident that you won't need it, as the new interface is rock solid and even easier to use.

Running the games

Just click on the option you want, whether it's Games, Utilities or Patches and another menu will appear. Browse through the menu options and click on the program you want to install. It's straightforward so you shouldn't have any problems.



cdtech@powerplay.next.com.au

Faulty CDs will be replaced free of charge. Send it, together with a description of the error, to:

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Redfern
NSW 2016 (No postage required)**

The Games

Star Trek: Secret of Vulcan Fury



Interplay

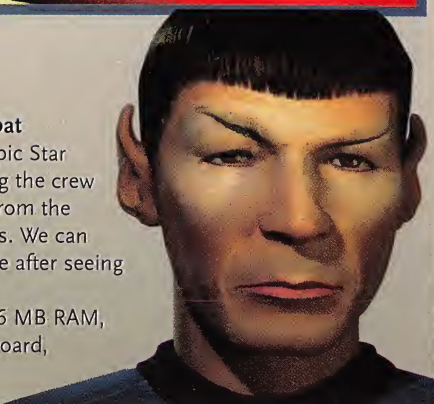
Space Simulator

Location on CD:

/games/startrek/run.bat

A preview of the next epic Star Trek adventure featuring the crew of the USS Enterprise from the original television series. We can hardly wait for the game after seeing this intro.

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA, mouse, sound board, Windows 95



AFL 98

EA Sports

Sports

Location on CD:

/games/afl/afl.bat

Experience Australia's number one spectator sport on your PC. This demo lets you play a 4 min quarter between the Adelaide Crows and the St Kilda Saints in a rematch of the '97 Season Final.

Requirements: Pentium-100, 16 MB RAM, Windows 95

Motorhead

Gremlin

Racing

Location on CD:

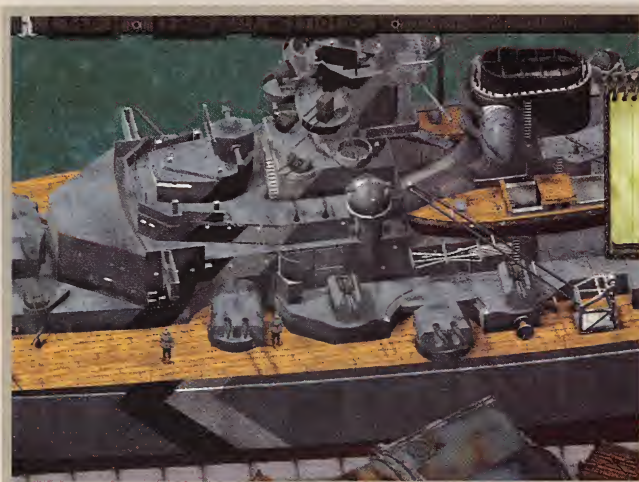
/games/motor/motor.exe

Motorhead is a game where speed makes the difference. Set in the near future, all the action takes place at the six venues of the Transatlantic Speed League. Venues range from downtown highways to abandoned mining facilities and success is rewarded with additional cars and courses.

Requires a 3Dfx card to play.

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA, mouse, 3D accelerator, sound board, Windows 95





COMMANDOS

Commandos
Eidos Interactive
Strategy (Real Time)

Location on CD: /games/comandos/comandos.exe

Commandos is a real-time tactical wargame that puts you in command of a squad of elite Allied Commandos. The demo comes with two missions to play, Baptism of Fire and Reverse Engineering, one involving blocking German communications and the other involving blowing up a dam to destroy bridges and electrical power.

Requirements: Pentium-100, 16 MB RAM, Windows 95

FINAL FANTASY VII

Squaresoft

Role Playing

Location on CD: /games/ff7/setup.exe

The popular role-playing game FFVII has arrived for the PC after conquering the PlayStation. This demo requires a 3Dfx card to play. The gameplay included lets you explore part of Mount Corel and its people. Install it and see if it lives up to the hype.

Requirements: Pentium-133, 32 MB RAM, 3-D accelerator, Windows 95



Hardball 6

Accolade

Sports - Baseball

Location on CD:

/games/hb6/hb6demo.exe

Play an exhibition game between the Cleveland Indians and the Florida Marlins at Jacob's Field in Cleveland in the demo for Accolade's 3D action baseball game.

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA, mouse, sound board, Windows 95



Red Alert

Westwood

Strategy

Location on CD:

/games/ra95demo/setup.exe

This follow-up to the hit Command & Conquer explores an alternate universe where Stalin rose to power, and it's the Soviet Empire storming into Europe. Pick a side, and wage war!

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA, mouse, sound board, Windows 95



WORLD CUP 98

EA Sports

Sports - Soccer

Location on CD:

/games/wcup/wcup98.exe

EA Sports' World Cup 98 brings to computer gaming one of the world's

great sporting events. World Cup 98 strives for a close recreation of the atmosphere and details of the World Cup tournament. This demo offers a sampling of the soccer gameplay by providing one two-minute set between England and Brazil played in the St Denis stadium.

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB, SVGA, mouse, sound board, Windows 95





MECH COMMANDER

Microprose

Simulation - Mech Style

Location on CD: /games/mech/setup/setup.exe

MechCommander is a real-time game of tactical combat and persistent resource management set in the BattleTech Universe. Players assume the role of a MechCommander in charge of a unit of MechWarriors. The Mech Commander playable demo features two unique missions not found in the full game.

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA, mouse, sound board, Windows 95



M.A.X. 2

Interplay

Strategy

Location on CD:

/games/max2/run.bat

Just when you thought it was safe to recolonise space, Interplay release the sequel to its award winning M.A.X strategy game. Your objective is to take over a planet currently occupied by two groups of creatures, the Concorde and the Oomans. The object in this demo is to find and destroy the enemy's mining operation.

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA, mouse, sound board, Windows 95

TOCA Touring Cars

Codemasters

Racing

Location on CD:

/games/car/cardemo.exe

TOCA Touring Car Championship features all the things you want in a car game. Advanced car physics including suspension dynamics, wheel spin, accurate collision reactions, varied traction, and realistic car handling. An added bonus is the thundering sound FX and frighteningly realistic graphics. Load it up and take your car for a spin. This one is as hard as hell with a

joystick and near impossible with just a keyboard - steering wheel highly recommended.

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA, mouse, sound board, Windows 95

Turok

Iguana Entertainment
Racing

Location on CD: /games/
d-turok/3dturok.exe

Crossing over from comic book to Nintendo 64 to PC, Turok represents a milestone in 3D action gaming. Colourful 3D texturing, inventive weapon art,

and realistic death animations combine to make for an intense gaming experience. You've seen it on the Nintendo 64, now experience it on your PC. A 3Dfx card is required.

Requirements: P-120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA, mouse, 3Dfx, sound board, Windows 95



Utilities

Garbage Cleaner

System Tool

Location on CD:

\UTILS\GARBAGE\SETUP.EXE

This software will help keep your entire system clean of the excess garbage which accumulates over time, keeping your system at peak performance and reclaiming your extra hard drive space. As you may or may not be aware, many of these files continually get recreated and leftover by Windows, but regular use of this software will allow you to keep things cleaned up.

Grabber

Internet Tool

Location on CD: \UTILS\GRABBER\SETUP.EXE

Grabber is a program designed to collect files attached to USENET news articles. It will automatically handle single or multipart articles. It has support for uuencoded or MIME\base64 attached objects. The user can set complex criterias and filters to reduce the amount of unwanted objects (spam). Downloads can be automatically prioritised based on criteria. Grabber can interact with Dial Up networking to dial up and hang up your internet connection as required.

Nuts & Bolts

System Tool

Location on CD:

\UTILS\BOLTS\BOLTS.EXE

Nuts & Bolts is a suite of powerful yet easy to use Windows 95 software utilities that helps you keep your PC working at optimum efficiency and speed. It can help you protect your valuable information, or recover it if

you've already encountered a problem with a disk drive

Out Of Context

System Tool

Location on CD:

\UTILS\OOC\INSTALL.EXE

Out Of Context is a shell context-menu for Win95. It contains a lot of very common operations and a bunch of others that are not so common. The purpose of them all is to make you more productive in the Win95 environment. This is done via a cute, Explorer like drag-drop interface. You can add, remove, and move both items, separators, and even sub-menus, thereby building a menu-tree that can go to any depth.

Paint Shop Pro 5

Graphics

Location on CD:

\UTILS\PSP\PSP5OEI.EXE

The newest version of the award-winning program from Jasc Software, Inc. Paint Shop Pro 5 contains the tools you will need to paint, edit, and retouch your images, and a browser to help manage your files.

Sandra Diagnostics

System Tool

Location on CD: \UTILS\SANDRA\SETUP.EXE

SiSoft Sandra (The "System Analyser, Diagnostic and Reporting Assistant") is a Windows information/diagnostic utility. It provides more information than some commercial diagnostic software currently available.

SmartDraw

Graphics Tool

Location on CD:

\UTILS\FLOW\SD95INST.EXE

SmartDraw is the easy-to-use program that lets anyone draw great looking flowcharts, diagrams and other business graphics. Great for the wannabe planner.

Surf Express

Web Tool

Location on CD: \UTILS\SURFEXP\SURFXPR.EXE

Using a combination of advanced caching and intelligent prefetching techniques, Surf Express improves the speed of Internet access by returning your favourite Web pages several times faster than your browser alone can.

Turbo Browser

File Viewer

Location on CD:

\UTILS\98TURBO\98TURBO.EXE

The Future of File Management is here. Use Turbo Browser to view, convert, print, compress, encrypt, copy, move, paste, delete, and batch process your files. The program comes with native or ActiveX Preview of HTML, ZIP and E-mails, documents, spreadsheets, images, clip arts, multimedia with the integrated viewer.

VisualBookMark

Web Tool

Location on CD: \UTILS\VISUAL\VBM1111.EXE

VisualBookMark for Netscape is an extended tool for bookmarking your web pages. This pro-

gram displays a visual representation of all your bookmarks, so you can preview the site without actually clicking on it.

Winamp 1.91

MP3 Player

Location on CD:

\UTILS\WINAMP\WINAMP.EXE

The best MP3 player just got better. In case you didn't know, Winamp is a fast, flexible, high-fidelity music player for Windows 95/98/NT. Winamp supports MP3, MP2, MOD, S3M, MTM, ULT, XM, IT, 669, CD-Audio, Line-In, WAV, VOC, and other audio formats, custom interfaces called skins, and audio visualization and audio effect plug-ins.

Wizmark

3Dfx Tool

Location on CD:

\UTILS\3DFX\WIZMRK30.EXE

Wizmark is a 3D performance benchmark created by 3Dfx Interactive that measures the performance of Direct 3D and 3D hardware accelerators. The benchmark utilises essential 3D rendering features which provide enhanced visual realism including Gouraud shading, texture mapping, alpha blending and much more.

PATCHES

As always, we throw whatever patches that come our way into the /PATCHES directory on the CD. This month's exclusive is the Doom source code and addons which you will read about further in this issue.

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SIDELINES

Roadshow sign Beam

Despite a recent downturn in the number of titles that they are publishing, Roadshow seem confident that their distribution arm will continue to be a strong local presence. Beam International Limited, one of Australia's largest multimedia development companies has been around for a seriously long time, going all the way back to the days of the C64. Lately, apart from a number of educational and edutainment releases, Beam Software have been most prominent with their Real Time Strategy games KKnD (Krush, Kill and Destroy), and KKnD2: Krossfire. Roadshow and Beam are expecting, or at least hoping, for sales of around \$AUD6 million over the next three years for the distribution of Beam software in Australia, New Zealand and parts of South East Asia. It doesn't sound like much compared to the projected sales in the North American and European markets of around \$AUD80 million, but at the moment Roadshow Interactive are probably grateful for all they can get.

Directsoft acquired by Take 2

Take 2 Interactive has been on a buying spree of late, recently acquiring UK developer SpiderSoft as well as BMG Interactive's assets in the European sector. They haven't ignored Australia though, and have recently taken over Directsoft Australia. The Directsoft name will stay, as will founder Bruce Wilson, though Wilson will now be reporting to Kelly Summer, president of Take 2 Interactive Europe.

Voodoo 1 prices tumble

In PowerPlay #23 we reviewed the Obsidian 100SB 4440. This 3D wonder is based on the original 3Dfx Voodoo chipset - but uses several of them on one board, somehow also finding room for 20Mb of RAM. Initially priced at a slightly unfriendly \$2800, the advent of Voodoo 2 has seen its price drop dramatically to just \$699. With Voodoo 2 offering superior performance for gamers, the Obsidian is obsolete technology, however its RAM and processing ability should be attractive to somebody... Contact the Gamesmen on 9584 8222.

3Dfx/Voodoo2 cooler fans

Even if you don't want to 'overclock' your 3Dfx/V2 card, chances are that it will still run 'hot'. And the hotter the chip(s) get, the more chance there is of malfunctions, or possibly even meltdown. If you're the type that does like to push your system and its components to the limits, then you should definitely be in the market for a cooling fan of some sort. A company called Tennmax based in the US might have just what you need - a small and thin cooling fan/heatsink solution that is stuck on to the chip(s) with adhesive. There's no local distributor as yet, and the exchange rate does make it a pricey option, but for more information head over the www.tennmax.com

UNREAL: THE SHOCKWAVE

Duke Nukem Forever drops Quake engine for Unreal

In a bombshell announcement, 3D Realms' boss George Broussard, through his finger service, announced that 3D Realms had taken the decision to drop the Quake 2 engine in favour of the Unreal engine for Duke Nukem Forever. He was at pains to point out that there was no acrimony between 3D Realms and id Software, and that it was purely a business decision to make DN4ever the best game it possibly could be.

Shortly afterwards, responding to a deluge of comments on fan sites, newsgroups, forums, and email from fans and the media, Broussard

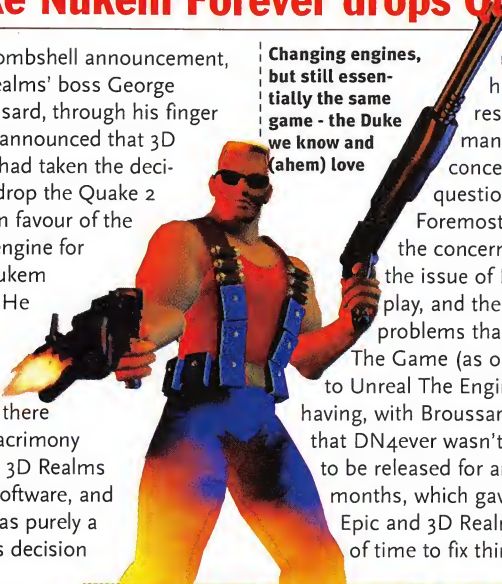
Changing engines, but still essentially the same game - the Duke we know and (ahem) love

updated his plan to respond to many of the concerns and questions raised.

Foremost among the concerns was the issue of Internet play, and the inherent problems that Unreal The Game (as opposed to Unreal The Engine) was having, with Broussard saying that DN4ever wasn't expected to be released for another 9 months, which gave both Epic and 3D Realms plenty of time to fix things prop-

erly. A similar line was taken regarding the high system requirements for Unreal, with Broussard saying that by the time DN4ever is released the specs won't seem so high, and that they would be optimising their levels to a much higher degree than Epic had done with Unreal. The third concern was delay over the game - DN4ever had been in full time development for at least 5 months using the Q2 engine, and people were worried that the change in engines would result in a delay to the completion of the game. Not so, said Broussard. The conversion between the engines was almost a trivial matter, and the only chance for delays would be if the 3D Realms team wouldn't be able to stop adding new features to the game, thanks to the versatility and the power of the Unreal Engine.

Nobody at id had made mention of the 3D Realms decision in their plan updates as we go to press, but there was some fascinating information on what types of cars they all owned and how fast they went, as well as the shock announcement regarding Q3 (see related story).



Quake 3 Doomed

Not to be outdone by 3D Realms' bombshell, John Carmack made sure that it was to be a month for controversies by announcing that the collective minds at id Software had changed, and that rather than continue to develop Quake 3 their next game would be 'Quake Arena'.

Rather than try to create two almost discrete games (single player and multiplayer) in the one product as they and most others have done in the past, id will concentrate solely upon the multiplayer aspects of the game with Quake Arena. There will be a single player mode, but this will only be in the form of a progression through deathmatch arenas against bots, and the main focus of the game will be upon all form of multiplay, including capture the flag,

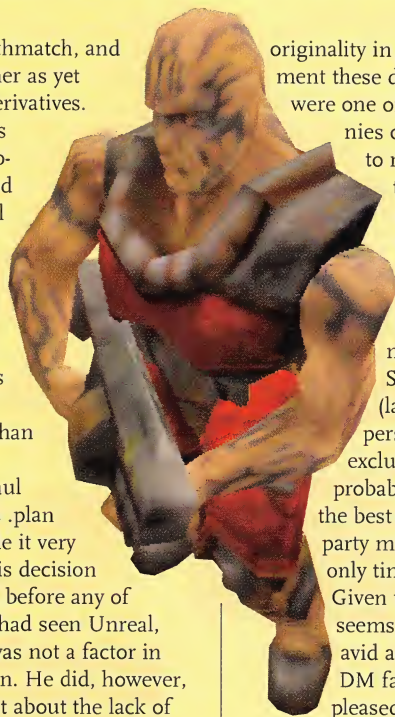
straight deathmatch, and a host of other as yet unnamed derivatives.

The graphics won't be sub-standard, and they will still be OpenGL only, but id are very open about their decision to focus upon game-play rather than graphics.

Id artist Paul Steed, in his plan update, made it very clear that this decision was reached before any of the id team had seen Unreal, and that it was not a factor in their decision. He did, however, make a point about the lack of

originality in games development these days, and that id were one of the few companies out there willing to risk trying something new and a bit different. As to whether it will work - using a concept almost pioneered by the id Software gurus (large scale first person deathmatch) exclusively as well as probably integrating the best of the third party mods out there, only time will tell.

Given the pedigree, it seems likely that both avid and prospective DM fans should be pleased with the news.



SPEC OPS:

GT to fight another day



caption caption caption caption caption caption caption caption caption

complaining vociferously about the many problems with the game that they had just paid \$80-odd dollars for. The "valuable feedback" from the gamers regarding the non-implementation of multiplayer (co-op and deathmatch) capabilities hasn't been ignored either, because you will be able to purchase an add-on pack soon after the release which will include deathmatch options. It seems likely that Australian and NZ gamers won't particularly mind waiting for a bug free version, but as to whether they will embrace the concept of paying (probably) half as much again for the privilege of multiplayer remains to be seen.



You may have heard about a tasty looking game called 'Spec Ops - Rangers Lead The Way', a third person military simulation developed by Zombie Interactive and distributed by GT Interactive. If you've been keeping your eye out in local stores to grab yourself a copy, then you may as well give up for a little while. The version released in the United States has come under some fairly heavy criticism for bugs, gameplay problems, the

game controls, and AI capabilities (or lack thereof).

However, we in Australia (and NZ) are blessed, because Zombie and GT have decided to hold off the release of the game (which will be known here as Spec Ops: Ranger Assault) until it's in a state that's worth purchasing. In a marvellous piece of spin doctoring, GT representatives tell us that the US release provided Zombie with "valuable feedback" from the gaming community - i.e.

Outrage as New Zealand

relaxes import rules

The New Zealand Government recently passed a repeal of the ban on parallel imports or patent and copyright goods, more commonly known as 'grey importing'. The repeal of the ban puts New Zealand in line with a very small number of other countries, including Japan and Singapore - both countries well known for their problems with large scale piracy of computer software.

Parallel importing means that whereas usually only distributors who had paid a fee for the license to import a software or hardware product into that country would be lawfully able to re-sell that product on to retailers and the public, anyone can buy any number of software or hardware products from overseas and import them for sale in New Zealand.

One of the many concerns that

distributors and retailers have cited is the lack of structure for many 'grey import' companies, which they feel will result in poor after-sales support. It is traditionally only authorised resellers and distributors that offer support and warranty for imported products, and this will not be necessary for new companies established to take advantage of the relaxed laws. Open market theorists are pleased with the outcome, because to their way of thinking it is the consumer that will benefit from the increased competition due to the (forecasted) increase in the number of importers distributing computer software and hardware at the



lowest price-point possible, however.

Importing pirated copies of computer software remains illegal, but with the relaxation over the structure for imports in general, it seems likely that it will be easier for large-scale and small-

scale pirating organisations to continue and broaden their enterprises. Such is the way of the world when the rule of economic determinism is applied though. No doubt many Australian importers and bureaucratic staffers will be watching the New Zealand situation as it develops, because the Australian government is at present considering implementing changes to the laws regarding parallel importing.

SIDELINES

EA Sports - they are the greatest!

EA Sports have announced that they will be adding a boxing title to the ever growing ranks of sports that they have created simulations for. In usual EA style, they have obtained the rights to use many of the current boxing champions and heroes of yesteryear, including Mohammed Ali, Evander Holyfield, Sugar Ray Leonard, and Oscar De La Hoya. Each fighter's strengths and weaknesses will be faithfully recreated, and current WBC Welterweight champion De La Hoya is apparently a huge video game fan, and plans to practice with the game before he goes out to his fights to "get him in the right frame of mind". Curiously there's no mention of whether the Mike Tyson ear biting manoeuvre will be available as a special move. We can but hope...

Interplay's Messiah engine for license

Shiny Entertainment (MDK), currently developing the FPA titled 'Messiah', will be licensing their game character engine through parent company Interplay. Commonly known as the 'Messiah engine,' the correct title for the technology is Real-Time Tessellation and Deformation (RT-DAT). Considering how impressive Messiah the game is looking, it probably won't be long before developers snap this up, because the engine actually divines the optimum performance of any machine, and then sets the graphics, including the character detail, to the optimum level for that machine - including machines with only 2D video cards.

Starcraft meets the Deer Hunter

WizardWorks, the 'budget' development arm of GT Interactive, are responsible for what we think are the most pathetic and lame games ever - the Deer Hunter, Trophy Hunter and Sporting Clay "games". Not only is the content execrable, but the level of graphic detail and gameplay elements are just plain pathetic - don't be taken in by the marketing hype on this one, people. The good news is that the same guys are developing a Starcraft add-on pack. Good news? Should we expect the same level of professionalism as displayed in the Deer Hunter series? If you're the kind of person that gets off by using your high powered rifle to shoot innocent bears drinking from a stream while you hide in the bushes, then you should probably be excited about this.

Evil software makes workers work!

DVD Software should be top on the list of any gamers 'most feared entity' list, as they are the company responsible for the nasty piece of software named 'AntiGame Plus'. The utility is designed to search networks and sniff out installations of games, and then uninstall them. Their web page notes that according to the 'Technology & Ethics in the Workplace' survey, nearly half of the respondents admitted that they had engaged in unethical actions, including playing games during work hours. Version 4.0 of Antigame can detect over 7500 games, and a downloadable database is updated often through the company's website. Be afraid, be very afraid.

NewsWire US



Don St John

What a disappointing E3 this year. I don't mean the games (more about which in a second), I mean that I didn't see anyone get stumbling, falling-over drunk at any of the parties. Is the gaming industry trying to lose all its cred? Maybe if I'd made it all the way to the Foo Fighters' surprise 2:30am appearance at the SegaSoft party, as your humble PC PowerPlay editor-in-chief did—I had to catch a train, myself—I'd have had better luck.

- Then again, the industry's real cred comes from the games, and I saw better ones this year than I ever had at the three prior E3's combined. Everything you've heard about Prey? True, and then some. Duke Nukem Forever? Back, badder than ever, and tooling around on top of a Quake II engine revamp that's so fast and sleek, it makes Quake II itself look like Wolfenstein 3D. The Wheel Of Time? Simply the best thing I've ever seen in early stages; if its initial promise holds up, I'm probably facing a mid-1999 divorce on grounds of neglect of wife and family.

- And that's just the stuff being distributed by one company, GT Interactive. There was plenty of other stuff that blew my doors off, and much of it with an international flavour. Finland's Remedy Entertainment is teaming with 3D Realms to do some outrageous graphics on Max Payne. Reports on Lionhead's first effort out of England (working title: Black and White) usually included the word "breathtaking." There were Scots everywhere, it seemed; VIS Interactive stood out with Hasbro's H.E.D.Z. and Interplay's Earthworm Jim 3.

- The great thing is that the majority of developers and players on the PC side are still happy to see everyone coming out with better and better stuff. Typical was overhearing Epic Megagames's Mark Rein in Microprose's demo room praising Klingon Honour Guard and X-COM Alliance, both based on Epic's Unreal engine. Yeah, Epic stands to do well on license fees if those games sell, but Rein's enthusiasm was sincere; he was clearly stoked that X-COM wasn't just an Unreal clone, but a true X-COM game.

- I'd gotten worried when I didn't see enough drunks at the show; usually the more sloshed people are, the better they're getting along. But even a reasonably sober gathering this year still yielded enough cool new stuff to warm this jaded player's gaming heart. Start saving up, folks.

Blizzard cancels Warcraft Adventures

Despite the recruitment of adventure game designer guru Steve Meretzky, Blizzard quietly announced that work would no longer continue on Warcraft Adventures: Lord Of The Clans, a graphical adventure game based around the Warcraft universe.

It doesn't seem to be a decision that Blizzard are proud of, as there was no mention of the decision in their press releases, nor was there a link to any explanation from their web page. Blizzard did, however, release a statement which read (in part);

"Following an intensive review of the game, [Blizzard] determined that given the game's current status and the rapidly changing technology of the industry, it would not be possible to complete development of the game within a reasonable time frame."



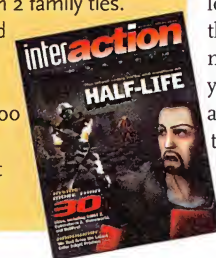
Meretzky, who has been involved with such landmark titles as Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy and Planetfall, was brought in at a fairly late stage in the development process, but he wasn't able to breathe enough life into the project to keep it going. Previous to working with Blizzard, Meretzky had been hosting the Computer Games Developer Conference (CGDC) open discussion, presciently entitled "Are adventure games dead?"



Oh really?

Interaction magazine liked Cyberstorm 2 so much they gave it a healthy 4 1/2 stars out of 5. Must be a top game, eh? Well, no, actually. Interaction is published by Sierra - as is Cyberstorm 2. The magazine only reviews Sierra games and that's fine by us, they don't hide that fact and all is generally well with the world. What we do have a problem with is the mighty sticker on the front of the box proclaiming its fabulousness according to Interaction, but conveniently failing to mention the Interaction/Sierra/Cyberstorm 2 family ties. It's called integrity, Sierra, and we all remember when you had some...

(The review copy arrived too late for us to pull out the PowerPlay bag of stars, next month for that).



General Electric, General Motors, General Games...

Eidos' Ian Livingstone appears to be priming his trusty cheque-book for further



acquisitions. Rumours first surfaced at E3 that Eidos is trying to buy Ascendant - or, one would presume, the part of it which used to be known as Sierra and may well be called CUC Software this week. These rumours persist, and are now accompanied by reports that Eidos is also trying to buy Psygnosis from Sony, which invited bids for the publisher following the PlayStation's successful launch, then decided to keep it. Eidos will say nothing more helpful than: "No comment", so draw your own conclusions. But would it be able to afford all three publishers? Or has it decided to leave Virgin to GT Interactive and go in search of consolation prizes? **SB**

It's Ronaldooooo!!!!



**INFOGRAMES
ENTERTAINMENT**

Infogrames is feeling very pleased with itself for having signed up Brazilian striker Ronaldo to star in a forthcoming football game. As well as benefiting from Ronaldo's endorsement, the multi-platform game will be based on motion-captured footage of his fancy footwork. If Infogrames can capture the player's electric pace and even a small percentage of his repertoire of trickery, it should be a winner. Unless, that is, the curse of Nike strikes - Infogrames acquired the rights to Ronaldo from the footwear company. **SB**

Ronaldo is one of the stars of World football today, here's hoping the game plays as well as he does



TOP TEN GAMES

Rank Title
Developer / Distributor

TW LW

1 **2** **FORSAKEN**

ACCLAIM / ROADSHOW

2 **3** **WORLD CUP 98**

EA SPORTS / EA.

3 **9** **UNREAL**

GT INTERACTIVE / ROADSHOW

4 **1** **STARCRAFT**

BLIZZARD / WOLF

5 **4** **T.A: Core Contingency**

CAVEDOG / GTI

6 **6** **STARSHIP TITANIC**

SIMON & SCHUSTER / HILAD CORP.

7 **5** **CROC**

FOX INTERACTIVE / EA

8 **12** **STAR WARS REBELLION**

LUCASARTS / METRO GAMES

9 **7** **BATTLEZONE**

ACTIVISION / ACTIVISION

10 **10** **CASTROL SUPERBIKE**

INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / METRO GAMES

Week ending 17th June

The ACER best selling charts are carefully compiled from a sample panel of retailers selected across Australia including mass merchants, department stores, specialty software stores and independent outlets. Retailers surveyed include Myer Grace Bros, K Mart, Target, Big W, Harvey Norman Computer Super stores, Hi-Tech World, Video Games Heaven, Games Wizards, Hedlam Computers, and Software Today. ACER assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions ©1997

Charts supplied by Australian Computer Entertainment Review

ACER

Sin to launch with Gamer Night

A little while back when Quake 2 and Heavy Gear was launched in Australia, Activision flew out some of the production staff from both id and the in-house development team responsible for Heavy Gear to launch the game. It wasn't just the usual round of interviews and noshests for journalists, marketers, retailers and other assorted lowlifes though, Quake 2 and HG were launched through what Activision called 'Gamer Nights' held in Sydney and Melbourne. At each night, 1000-odd gamers were invited along to see the game previewed and ask questions of the developers themselves. It was a success for all concerned so they're doing it again, this time for the much anticipated FPS, Sin, from Ritual Entertainment, but only in Sydney. If you're interested, send an email to sin@activision.com.au, or call (02) 9869 0955 in order to secure your place - the first 1000 entrants will receive tickets on a first-come-first-served basis.



NewsWire UK

Steve Boxer

Q: When is a console not a console? A:

When it's a cut-down PC that plugs into your TV.

Which adequately describes Dreamcast, Sega's next-generation "128-bit" console. Dreamcast, which should be coming to a retail outlet near you towards the end of 1999 (don't hold your breath now), will run a console-specific version of Microsoft's Windows CE and, along with a custom-designed Hitachi SH4 processor (the only 128-bit part in the machine), will rely on a PowerVR 2 chip for its 3D graphics grunt. In other words, Dreamcast is the ultimate acknowledgement that when it comes to games-playing, the PC lords it over the consoles.

Dreamcast may sound like a kiddies' toy, but I'm convinced that, unlike the plug-ugly and recalcitrant Saturn, it will prove to be a hit. There are a number of clinching factors, none less important than Sega's attitude to the machine. Irimajiri-san himself, president of Sega, was at pains to point out that this time round, Sega won't leave its machine to fend for itself outside of Japan, but will throw marketing funds at it. It will come with a modem as standard - providing the on-line gaming fraternity with the mass-market boost it has been seeking for years. And it has some innovative touches, such as the VMS handheld/memory card, which plugs into either controller and will enable participants in multi-player games to switch tactics without pulling down telltale on-screen menus.

But the single most important aspect of Dreamcast is the presence of Windows CE. Never mind that many developers, aiming to squeeze every ounce out of Dreamcast, will delve under WinCE's surface and directly address the hardware; once a certain number of Dreamcasts have been sold, there will be hundreds of other developers revelling in the fact that they can port their PC games to the machine with zero effort. UK developers are positively drooling over Dreamcast, particularly now that, in DirectX 6.0, Microsoft appears to have sorted out Direct3D. And Sega, in its turn, has taken the unprecedented step of going out to woo developers, even signing up a number of British and French ones to create Dreamcast games which Sega itself will publish.

This all suggests that, when Irimajiri-san asserted that the company's future depends heavily on Dreamcast, he wasn't joking. The biggest question Dreamcast raises, however, concerns the very future of consoles. Will they all be cut-down PCs, and if so, how will the general public be able to decide which one to buy?



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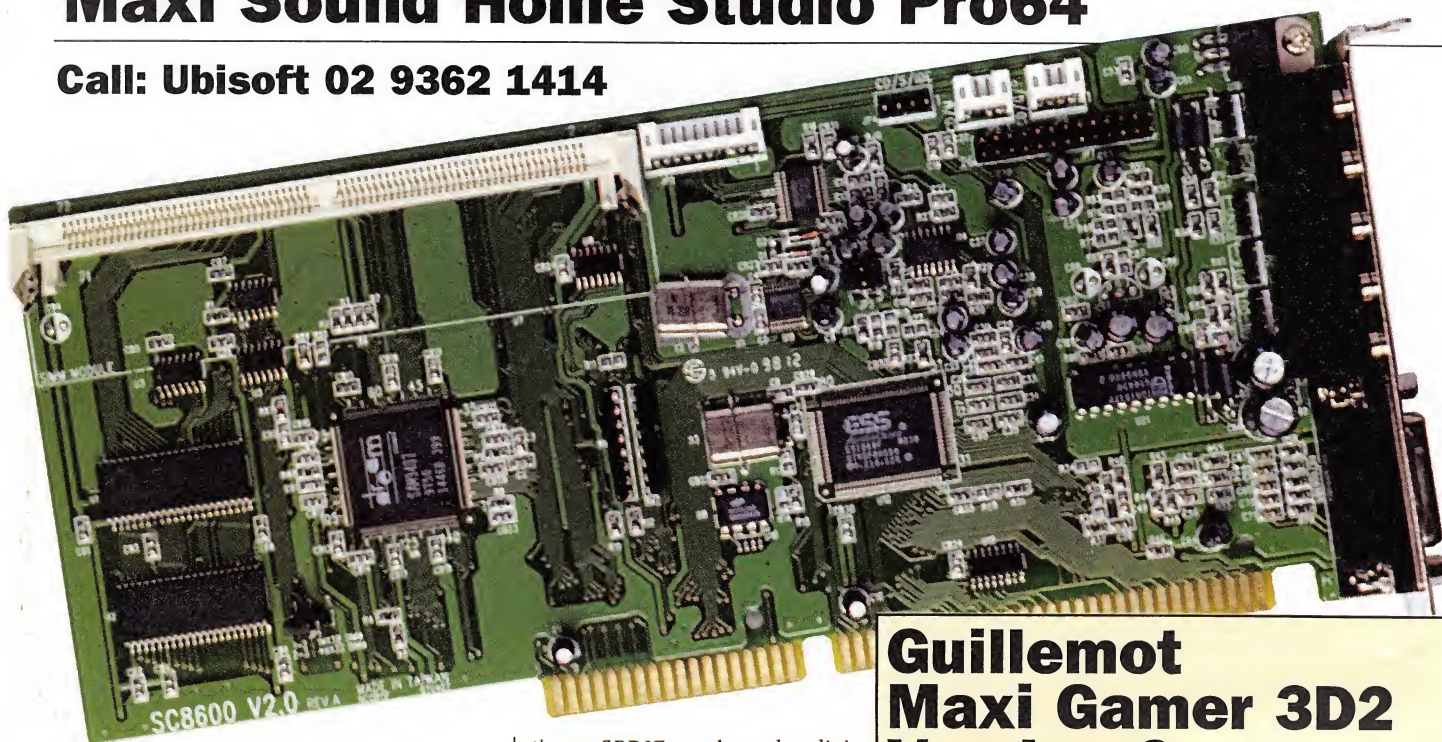
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Total Harmonic Distortion: Not Provided

Signal To Noise ratio: ≥91dB

It's not just a pair of kickass speakers that's required for a truly immersive gaming experience. It doesn't really matter how good your speakers are if you don't have a decent sound card to provide that extra leap in quality that makes the difference. Guillemot have carved a name for themselves as a viable alternative to the household name sound cards (Sound Blaster, and of late, the Diamond Monster Sound range), and the Home Studio Pro 64 is their top of the range "do-everything" card. It's perhaps best suited to the serious sound enthusiast, particularly those who dabble with their own recordings, but if you have the cash and you just want a great sounding sound card with plenty of configurability then this is the goods.

As the name suggests, you get 64 voices (all in hardware) along with a RISC based 50 MIPS digital signal processor, a hardware wavetable synthesis full-duplex opera-

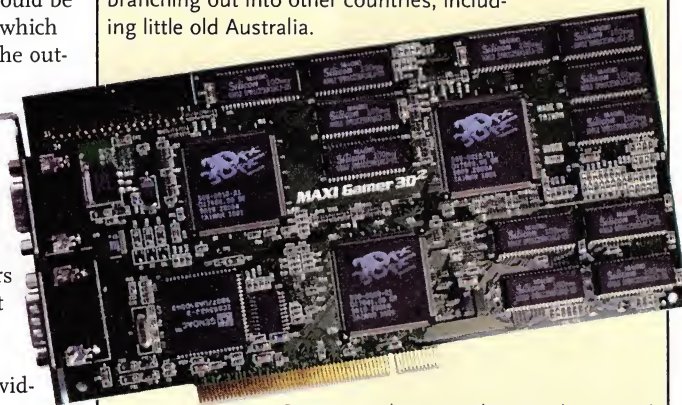
tion, a SPDIF out through a digital daughterboard, and support for surround sound via a quad speaker array. The software supplied is more than adequate for your gaming needs, and provides a full suite of applications for creating, recording and editing music samples. Of most interest to game-oriented users would be the Maxi FX application, which allows you to customise the output for any game you like, including effects such as chorus and reverb, a 4 band graphical equaliser, and a real time graphical representation of the sound output from your speakers so that you can figure out what sounds best with your setup. Guillemot's suggested setups for individual games (such as Quake, Unreal, Myth and many more) can be downloaded from their website too.

There really is enough to keep any sound enthusiast happy, and of course the sound is crisp and clear. Installation is a breeze, and even though some of the software does seem to delve into complicated aspects of the sound output, it's presented in such a way as to make it easy for novices. All up; it's expensive, but well worth it if you like high quality immersive sound for your games.

Guillemot Maxi Gamer 3D2 Voodoo 2

Ubisoft 02 9362 1414

Guillemot have been around in Europe for a while now, and have established a name for themselves as a quality manufacturer and distributor of computer peripherals, particularly in the mid to high-end range of soundcards. Through an agreement with Ubisoft they are branching out into other countries, including little old Australia.



So now we have another Voodoo 2 card on offer, and in reality there just isn't much difference between one Voodoo 2 card and another - the only differences are the software (demo or full versions of games) included and the drivers for the card. Unlike the Voodoo 1, the Voodoo 2 cards have a ROM chip that will only allow the manufacturer's drivers, or 3Dfx reference drivers, to be used with each card - gone are the days of using Diamond drivers on your Orchid card, for example. The drivers that Guillemot offer are decent, but still the 3Dfx reference drivers offer the best performance, it seems, so it comes down to the software package and price. The Maxi Gamer is priced very competitively compared to the other cards on offer, and you do get 2 free games as well. The 8MB version retails for \$489, with the 12MB going for \$569, so if you're in the market for a Voodoo 2, then they're well worth considering.

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Output level: 0.6V (at 230 mV Rated Input)

Dimensions (mm): 94x245x155

Weight: 1 kg (right) 0.8 kg (left)

Subwoofer Specifications

Amplifier output: 25 Watts @ 4 Ω

High cut filter: Low, High

Pressure level: 98dB (maximum)

Capacity: 8.0l

Frequency response: 35 to 250 Hz (-10dB)

Dimensions (mm): 280x200x259

Weight: 5.5 kg

A decent set of speakers coupled with a beefy subwoofer makes a huge difference to your PC. Playing music through the CD-ROM drive is much enhanced - and revving the volume control up to 11 and popping off a couple of double shotgun rounds into some poor grunt

becomes an awesome ground shaking experience. We took a look at an earlier incarnation of the Yamaha range of PC speakers in last years Hot Hardware guide, and we liked what we saw. This time around, a combination 2 speaker/subwoofer system is now available, featuring a Digital Surround Processor. Note: this is not the same thing as a Digital Signal Processor - Yamaha's version is really just a spatialiser, whereas for Digital Sound Processing a separate chip is required to digitise the sounds.

Even so, it still sounds very nice indeed, and if you've been making do with a sub-standard speaker system then this might well be worth a look. The sound from the speakers is crisp and clear, belying their (comparatively) small size, and the sub-



woofer pumps out a very nice earth shattering bass too. With the volume jammed on full and Unreal on the screen it wasn't long before an excited crowd of admirers stopped by for a look at what was making their pens bounce on their desks. The colour scheme, too, is pleasant, in that it fits right in with the drab beige look favoured by case and monitor manufacturers. There are better kits out there, but for the price, you could do a lot worse than this system.

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Front and Rear speaker support: No

RRP: \$145.

Orchid's latest offering; the Nusound, easily lives up to Orchid's high standards. The Nusound isn't just a sound card, it's an audio device that delivers pristine sound quality to rival extremely professional setups.

Firstly, the sense of stereo separation that the Nusound delivers is fantastic. The crispness and clarity that the card delivers is so accurate that you hear sounds from music CDs you have never heard before, even at high volumes. The Nusound is even superior to the Yamaha sound card in this respect.

Wave output is at a level that leaves every other sound card reviewed for dead. This was the only card where you could hear the differ-

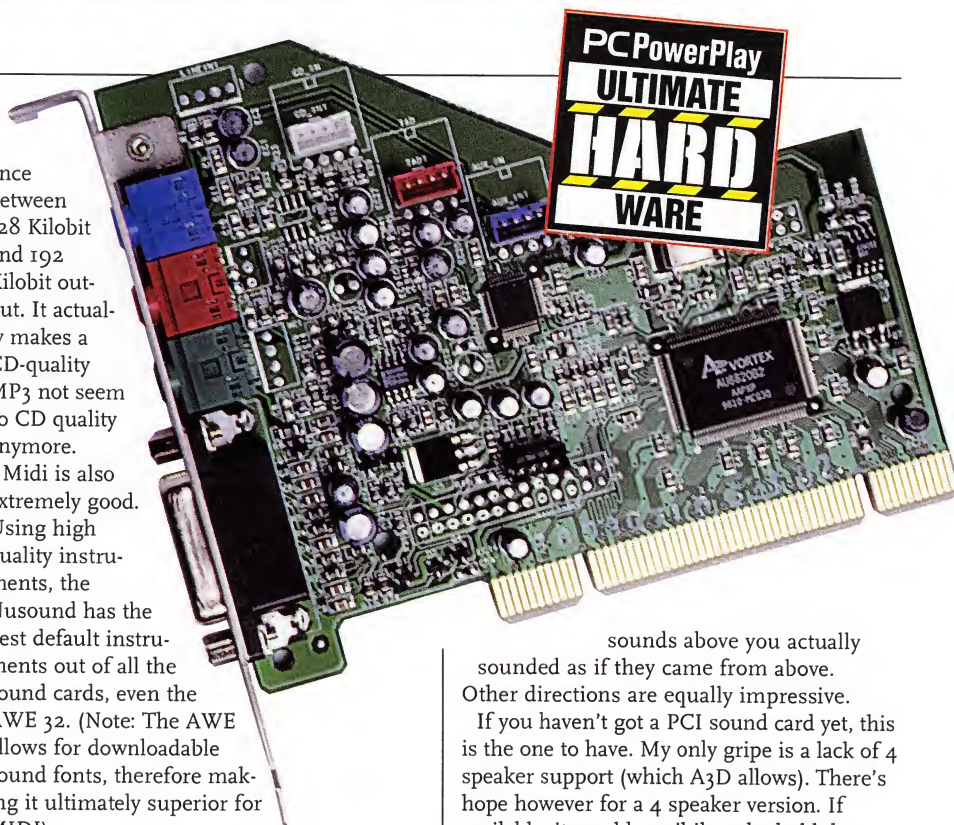
ence between 128 Kilobit and 192 Kilobit output. It actually makes a CD-quality MP3 not seem so CD quality anymore.

Midi is also extremely good. Using high quality instruments, the Nusound has the best default instruments out of all the sound cards, even the AWE 32. (Note: The AWE allows for downloadable sound fonts, therefore making it ultimately superior for MIDI).

Finally, the Aural 3D effects the card offers are sensational. It's the only card where

sounds above you actually sounded as if they came from above. Other directions are equally impressive.

If you haven't got a PCI sound card yet, this is the one to have. My only gripe is a lack of 4 speaker support (which A3D allows). There's hope however for a 4 speaker version. If available, it would annihilate the hold the Monster Sound 3D has on 4 speaker digital surround in the market. **JL**



SAITEK PC DASH

Contact: Innovision 1300 785 795

RRP: \$149

The PC Dash is really just a fancy keyboard interface, though the buttons are big and friendly, and the software is very easy to customise to your liking. Essentially, it just piggy-backs on to your keyboard connection so that when you press a button on the 'dash' it's interpreted by your PC as a keyboard command (or combination of commands).

Along with being programmable and customisable, the PC Dash also comes with a number of pre-programmed 'gaming sheets' for many popular games, and many more are available for download from the Saitek site. Provided you have a printer, creating or using downloaded game sheets is a simple task, and works well.

However, there are a few problem areas with the product, firstly the barcode system that is employed. Each game sheet comes with a barcode that is scanned in by the Dash when inserted, but you have to do this manually by running the scanner over the barcode. We had a few niggly problems getting this to work correctly, because the scan-

ner has to be run over the code at a certain speed - not too fast, not too slow, and without any jerking.

Once we got the hang of it (or got lucky), everything worked well, though this really isn't the kind of peripheral that's suited to full-time use. It seems that the PC Dash would be best suited to be used as a secondary input for a couple of hotkeys or key combinations that are hard to get to on a normal keyboard, because the interface is too unwieldy to be of use as the major command centre, and the 8-way directional controller is much too sticky to be of use.

So, if you're a flight sim fan, the PC Dash



might come in handy on occasion for the odd keystroke or command, but really it's not much good when used as the main interface.

AGE of EMPIRES

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Lightening fast speeds, stunning graphics and incredible textures – Creative is bringing gamers one step closer to the real thing with this single slot PCI card.

Microsoft SIDEWINDER Force Feedback Pro

Sidewinder Force Feedback Pro breaks new ground in game play by introducing a new sensory experience to gaming – the sense of touch, or force – to the existing senses of sight and sound.



Get into the mud-kicking world of gas-powered thunder with Monster Truck Madness 2.

MICROSOFT GOLF 1998 EDITION

Experience Golf as it really is, from the crisp impact of your driver at the first tee to the ball vanishing into the cup on the eighteenth.

OUTWARS

Strap a Jet Pack onto your battle armour and select a lethal array of weaponry – you and your squad are all that stand between Earth and the savage Skull hordes.



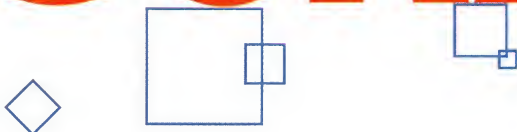
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FINGER?**



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PREPARE TO BE SCRATCHED



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Microsoft®

Big name, off the shelf PCs, are they GAMEWORTHY?

March Stepnik roadtests the latest mainstream PCs, assessing not brute power, but more importantly:

1. Ease of setting up

- can a complete moron get it up and running?

2. Multimedia

- The quality of the graphic and audio subsystems

3. Upgradability

- ease of adding new bits

Pre-packaged, ready to go, factory made computers. Why the hell do people buy these things? Rattle off a list of components to your mate at the computer shop (the one named "Hi! My name is Richard"), and you'll get a system with more for a lot less.

Smart shopping

Well, in practice this theory may sound correct, but in reality, we all know what happens. The hard drive doesn't work. You have to drive out to the other side of town so that Hi! My Name Is Richard can tinker with it. A new interface is necessary. There are no parts in store at the moment, will hit the county early next week. Next week becomes the week after, then the week after that. The cost of the service is under warranty, but the time wasted is not. Another part conks out on you a few weeks later. You drive back to the store. In its place is an op-shop. You take the computer to a well known dealer. They charge the Earth for a service. They also inform you that the part causing the problems doesn't officially exist. An entire replacement is needed. That cheap computer is now costing you an arm and a leg, and a very uncomfortable ulcer.

This of course isn't the only way things work out. Quite a few people get the computer and have

no problems at all. Then again, some people experience worse than what was just described.

Is good brand!

People buy ready made computers from well-known companies for peace of mind. This peace of mind comes at a cost of course, but for what's offered, value is to be had. Once ridiculously expensive and only viable to those with plenty of dosh, value is something that has only recently become an important consideration, and most notably, apparent in today's kits. Most kits include everything you need, and most of what you want in a complete PC package. Microphones, speakers, mice, keyboards, software, monitors, graphics accelerators are all pre-loaded into one easy to use solution and require only a minimal level of effort to set up.

Another impressive advantage is that the companies behind these computers offer a good level of support and a decent set of warranties to keep you covered well into the future. Also, since the kits are coming from more reputable dealers, chances are very high that the parts you get are actually genuine.

Once a toy for the upper class family, the Mainstream PC is now a more accepted platform from which to start your computer upgrading addiction. While it's true that some companies (we're not going to name names - they



So you can be sure Unreal will look great & play fast, is why we did this. Anything with a 400MHz chipset, L2 cache, plenty of RAM and a 12MB Voodoo 2 card should do a good job of it

know who they are - shame on them) made it extremely difficult to upgrade the machine and herded the lesser informed into the trap of buying completely new computers, the current crop of machines are all upgrade-friendly. Affordable and user-friendly, these kits are taking on a resurgence in popularity.

What we looked for:

So we at PC PowerPlay took four complete PC packages, road tested them, and posted our thoughts. Unlike other PC PowerPlay Lab reports, this one is a little more open-ended. As far as relevant details are concerned, we wanted to know the quality of the components included. Whether or not

they were easy to setup. If they had enough expansion ports to support a serious upgrade spree. Whether or not as a stand alone machine, they stood up to the task of taking on the hard core gamer in you. At the end of each review is a score, out of five. This score relates to the overall impression of the machine, and not it's performance. It also doesn't take into account the price. RRP fluctuates frequently, so always check with the dealer for the current RRP.

An important thing to remember when buying one of these PCs, is to make sure you get what you paid for. Components may vary from make to make, even within the same model. Double check and don't be afraid to ask.



Gateway 2000 G6400

SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel 400 MHz Pentium II processor
- Intel 440 BX chipset running at 100MHz system bus
- 512K L2 Integrated Cache
- 64 MB SDRAM
- 10 GB Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- DVD-ROM Drive
- 1 x 1.44 MB 3.5" Floppy Disk Drive
- Nvidia 4MB AGP Graphics Accelerator
- 12MB Voodoo 2 3D Graphics Card
- Ensoniq Wavetable Sound Card
- x2 Tech Modem
- Mid-Tower Case
- 3 x internal expansion bays and 2 external bays
- 3 x DIMM slots
- 1 x AGP, 1 x ISA, 3 x PCI and 1 x PCI/ISA slots
- 2 USB ports, 1 x Parallel, 2 x Serial, 1 x PS/2 Keyboard and 1 x PS/2 mouse port
- VX900 19" Monitor
- Boston Acoustic Media Theatre Speakers
- MS PS/2 Intellimouse
- Win 95 Keyboard
- MS Windows 95
- RRP: \$5899

Just a brief look at the specs sheet had us weak at the knees. The G6-400 is one amazing piece of hardware. Plenty of RAM, a hefty 400MHz processor, 10 gigabyte hard drive, and then some. Not only does it ship with high end components, but the peripherals are top class too. Developed with the high end user in mind, the only off-putting aspect about the G6-400 is the price.

SETUP

Completely straightforward. Using the popular corresponding coloured jacks and cables,

Gateway 2000 include a full colour wall chart explaining the very simple process of setting up the computer. Also features little pictures next to the ports corresponding to their various functions. Anyone that can't manage this stage of setup should probably use paper instead.

MULTIMEDIA

It all starts with the Intel 440Bx motherboard. Not the fanciest motherboard out there, but up there. Add to this is a DVD-ROM drive, 64 MB of SDRAM, a 10 Gigabyte Ultra ATA hard drive, a 4MB nVidia graphics card, 12MB Voodoo II card and an Ensoniq sound card, and you have a package that would rival many custom built PCs. Not stopping there, the G6-400 also throws in a set of Boston Acoustic Media Theatre speakers with which to mess up your senses. A sub woofer is included. Not a well known company, Boston Acoustic have shown amicably that they can handle the task of supporting powerful computer audio applications. Packed with an 18" inch monitor.

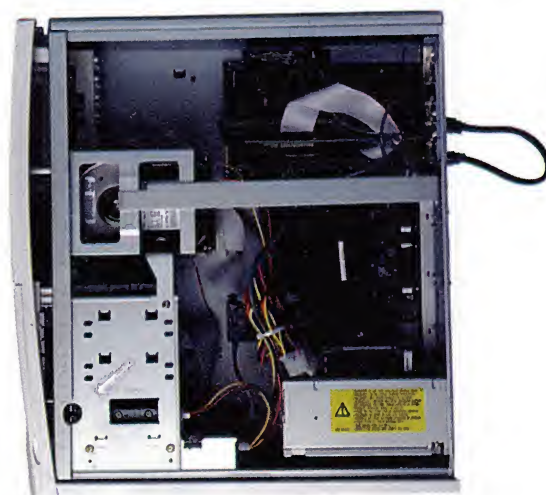
Upgradability/Accessibility

Unscrewing the side panel gives access to the inner working of this larger tower case. Initial impressions of the interior were much like those of new cars - roomy, spacious, and comfortable. With components well spaced out and suitably placed, not only is there more airflow in the gaps (helping cool down the system), command of inner workings is always rather clear.

With 3 PCI slots, 1 ISA, and 1 ISA/PCI slot and 3 RAM DIMM's, this kit has got the infrastructure to allow a hearty upgrade onslaught. Not that you'd need to upgrade much though.

GAMEWORTHY

Are you kidding? With perhaps some extra RAM installed and second Voodoo II card



Does this one look just like the others? To the untrained eye, it may. This computer has got all you'd want in a ready to go package. The Voodoo II card, the 10 GB hard drive. Spaced out and open, the metal support bar that cuts across the lower half doesn't hamper access at all, as suspected.

installed, you'd have yourself the dream machine. This however, delves into the unnecessary. With what's included, upgrades are only really necessary for the hard core enthusiast. Using the nVidia AGP card (which provides excellent 2D performance) and the Voodoo II card (excellent 3D performance), the G6-400 will be able to handle most of what's thrown its way. The Boston Acoustics make a huge difference to the gaming, and gamers will be pleased to know that the Microsoft Intelli Mouse is included - giving you a great performance mouse for the rigours of constant clicking. Put together by people that know their gaming.

We're still trying to get past the price though.

OVERALL





Acer Aspire T5073

SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel 300 Mhz Pentium II processor.
- DX65 LX Motherboard running @ 66Mhz bus
- 512 MB Cache
- 32 MB SDRAM
- 3.2 GB Hard Drive
- 32x (Max) CD-ROM drive
- 1 x 1.44MB 3.5" Floppy Disk Drive
- ATI 3D Rage Pro (64-Bit 2MB SGRAM 3D AGP graphics accelerator) Video Card
- Magic Mp56 Max Modem 16-bit 3D Stereo Audio card
- 56kbps voice/data fax modem
- Minitower case
- 3 x DIMM slots
- 2 x 5.25" external expansion bays and 1 x 3.5" internal expansion bay
- 3 x PCI and 3 x ISA expansion slots
- 2 x USB ports, 1 x 16550 FIFO serial port, 1 x ECP/EPP parallel port, 1 x PS/2 mouse port and 1 x keyboard port.
- 15" Acer View monitor - resolution: 1280 x 1024, 0.28 mm dot pitch (14" and 17" optional)
- Altec Lansing ASC 90 amplified stereo speakers
- MS compatible mouse
- Microphone
- MS Windows 95
- RRP: \$3099

Acer have been building computer packages for years now, and with the Aspire T5073 are aiming at the lower end ready made computer shopper. Respectable, solid and comprehensive, this package uses the more generic and cheaper component set to get the user up and running with minimal fuss.

Setup

Straight out of the box this computer requires only a rudimentary installation run.

Just to make sure they haven't leave out even the newest of converts, Acer have included a colour poster with a simple set of instructions in how to get the PC connected and ready for use. On the flip side is an invaluable diagram pointing out the various parts of a computer (to ensure users don't confuse components like the keyboard and monitor).

Multimedia

The T5073 is made up of reliable, low cost components. Built around the DX65 LX motherboard, this system won't deliver blistering speed, nor breath taking performance. It will however, run most of what ever the average home user could throw at it. Utilising the ATI 3D Rage Pro, which is built on board the DX65 LX motherboard (rather than in PCI card format), Acer have gone the all in one solution option using a combination 2D/3D video chip. A good 2D performer, the ATI Rage Pro is somewhat behind in the 3D acceleration stakes. Other than that, the hard drive gives you a good place to start, with 3.2 GB (watch it fill up quickly though), a fast CD-ROM drive and enough RAM to whet your appetite. With a combined modem and 16-bit sound card, you're getting the bare standard in sound technology today. The Altec Lansing speakers are more than enough for those wanting enough volume.

Accessibility/Upgradability

Rather than having to pull off the entire casing, the Aspire allows for just one side panel to be removed to gain access to the inner workings of the PC (the other side panel can be removed for more fiddly work). One panel means less screws to remove and a lesser chance of losing them. Internally, the Aspire T5073 was designed to be kind to the hardware enthusiast. With three spare PCI slots and two spare ISA slots on daughter board, there's

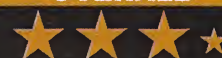


The Aspire wins in the accessibility department. Open, clear, and nary a tangled mess of cables to be seen. The only computer of those reviewed with a daughter board, things are still neat and nothing of great importance to the upgrader is located under it. enough room to install those cards of joy you've always wanted. There's also a internal drive bay so that you can install a second hard drive when the time is right. With one of three RAM DIMM slots taken up with a 32MB DIMM, the user can install either 16MB, 32MB, 64MB or 128MB DIMM's to bring the total to a very respectable 384MB of RAM.

Gameworthy

You forked out the cash and you want a blistering game machine. The processor isn't the whole story though. With the components what they are, you've got yourself a decent games machine that'll play most of current hot stuff out there. For games like Unreal however, you're going to want to start saving for a slew of upgrades.

OVERALL



THIS IS NOT THE INTERNET



Wireplay
The games network

LOW PING QUAKE NOW ON WIREPLAY.

WHAT SOME OF THE HOTTEST GAME PRESS HAVE HAD TO SAY:

"Wireplay is poised to force its way into the hard core scene with Quake which clocks pings of 105 milliseconds (on a 28.8 modem). We shit you not" ZONE 57 - Dec 97

"Online gaming has taken a major step forward with Wireplay now delivering Quake with ping times as low as 105 milliseconds"

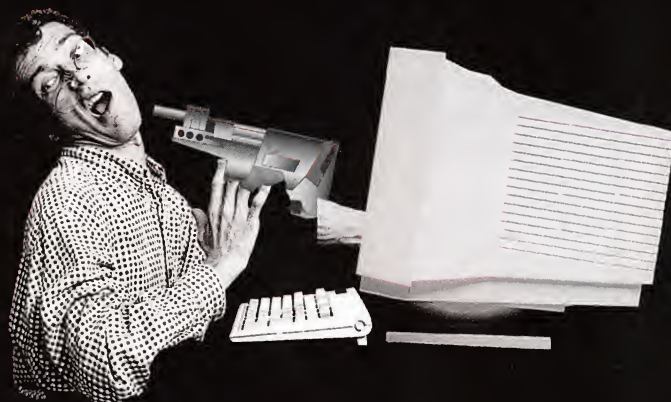
PC REVIEW - Dec 97

"It's consistency and lack of network congestion and dropped packets make Wireplay a pleasure" PC GAMING WORLD - April 98

"Shit-hot performance & support for outstanding games such as TA"

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Compaq Presario 4640

SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel Pentium II 300 MHz Processor
- Compaq LX motherboard
- 512 KB Pipeline burst Cache
- 64 MB SDRAM
- 6.0 GB hard drive
- DVD-ROM (Series I) Drive
- 1x 3.5" floppy disk drive
- ATI 3D Rage Pro (64-Bit 2MB SGRAM 3D ACP graphics accelerator) Video Card
- 16-bit sound card
- K56 Flex modem
- Tower case
- 2 x DIMM slots
- 2x PCI slots and 1x ISA slot
- 2x USB ports
- Parallel port, serial port, mouse and keyboard ports.
- 15" inch monitor! "check!!!!"
- JBL 3D Universal Speakers
- MS Compatible mouse
- Keyboard
- MS Windows 95
- RRP: 14' monitor \$4099
- 15' monitor \$4299
- 17' monitor \$4799

Compaq make a good computer, though they tend to have a bit of a reputation. Not a very good one either. In days gone by, the only way to upgrade one of these ready made computers was to dump the old one into the bin and purchase an brand new one. Aiming to clean up that aspect of their computers, the Presario 4640 is a step in the right direction.

SETUP

The Presario 4640 is a smaller unit and thus eats up less desk space. Like the other

package providers, Compaq have slipped in an easy to read installation section with plenty of easy to follow diagrams to ensure that no problems are had in getting the computer up and running.

MULTIMEDIA

Compaq know the value of RAM and thus have included 64MB of SDRAM to give this machine some extra grunt. Based on an in-house developed Compaq LX motherboard, Compaq have gone the well worn path and used an ATI 3D Rage Pro 2D/3D video chip on board. This time however, the chip includes 4MB of SyncGraphics video memory. Included in this package is a DVD drive, which will play all existing CD-ROM data except for the CD-R stuff media. With a hefty 6 Gigabyte hard disk drive, the Presario 4640 is a computer that will perhaps only need a video card upgrade to edge this machine into the truly impressive range. Sound too was held in high esteem so included is a pair of JBL 3D Natural Theatre speakers.

ACCESSIBILITY/UPGRADABILITY

Doing the research and giving us impressive components, Compaq for some reason left all the expertise behind in the setup department. Clear instructions are given on how to open the case, and this is done with little trouble. Then it becomes apparent. With a smaller sized tower case being used, the internal components of the Presario 4640 are horribly cramped. Organised in such a way that all the most accessible parts are blocked, confusion is more likely when tinkering with this kit. To get to the processor and RAM however, is a truly mystifying experience. To access the DIMM's, one must now unscrew the actual motherboard from the casing, and slot it out of position. With the top of the motherboard facing in, and



This is a simple case of "What were they thinking?". After ripping of the outer shell, to access the RAM DIMM slots and to gain better access to the PCI and ISA slots, one must remove the entire mother board from the structure. Then the cables. Not only a pain, this has computer damage potential written all over it.

the casing in an upright position, to access the face of the motherboard you have to disconnect all cords and cables running from the board to other components in the case. At best annoying, at worst damaging, you can only wonder as to the motivation behind such a primitive design. Disappointing too is the number of expansion slots. With only 2 PCI slots and 1 ISA slot, Compaq are assuming you don't want to upgrade your computer much.

Gameworthy

This is more like it. A good slab of RAM, ample hard drive space, DVD capability, and great speakers packaged. Still, with that 2D/3D combo card packed on board you're only going to get average video performance in 3D games. Until you buy another Voodoo II, of course!

OVERALL





Packard Bell Legend 7170

SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel 300MHz Pentium II processor
- Portland Trident 975 chipset
- 512Kb Pipeline burst level 2 Cache
- 32MB SDRAM
- 1 x 3.2 GB Maxtor 8324003 Hard Disk Drive
- 1 x 3.5" Floppy Disk Drive
- PCI local bus video and PCI local bus IDE hard drive interface
- ATI 3D Rage Pro (64-Bit 2MB SGRAM 3D ACP graphics accelerator) Video Card
- 16-bit sound card
- US Robotics x2 56kbps modem
- Tower case
- 24 x CD ROM drive
- 3 x DIMM slots.
- 3 x PCI slots, 2 x ISA slots
- 2 x USB ports, parallel port, serial port, mouse and keyboard ports.
- 15" (13.9" viewable) monitor with built in speakers and sub-woofer.
- MS compatible mouse
- Microphone
- MS Windows 95
- RRP \$ 3699

American giants Packard Bell seem to have a similar philosophy to Microsoft. Keep it simple and uniform; let the techs worry about the fiddly bits behind the scenes. Consistent with the eye-catching mini tower casing, the peripheral components of the Legend 7170 are quite stylised and smack of interesting design.

SETUP

Good design stems from plenty of experience, so as expected Packard Bell have done as much as possible to ensure that even a mon-

key with a learning difficulties could setup one of their computers with ease. To make things just a little bit less confusing, sockets come with a small little picture next to them indicating their function - a small monitor for the monitor cable, a mouse to indicate the PS/2 mouse port, etc. Just in case all this seems a little too challenging, the Legend 7170 also comes with a 'bright, easy to follow poster with such helpful steps as "Turn on the computer by pressing the power button on the front".

Multimedia

Packard Bell have also opted for the 2D/3D all in one video solution with the ATI 3D Rage Pro card. More than adequate in the 2D department, which as stated before slips in 3D performance compared to the more common cards out there. Packed with 32MB SDRAM and a 3.2GB hard drive, you've got good quality components making up this system, though obviously a starting point for the avid computer user.

There's a speaker set and sub woofer included, though surprisingly these aren't separate components! Built into the monitor itself, these speakers are loud enough to make you smile, but by no means high end. With the sub woofer built in too, you don't have the option of placing it on the ground for greater sonic effect. Volume controls aren't found on the monitor however. Seemingly trivial but extremely handy, Packard Bell have added a few extra bells and whistles to the keyboard, from which you can now adjust volume, open the CD drive, and even bring up the Packard Bell Navigator Assistant to name a few.

ACCESSIBILITY/UPGRADABILITY

We looked long and hard for any reference to the inner bits of the Legend 7170 but found nothing. Once inside, the Legend 7170 was



With perhaps the most stylish and visually pleasing case of the four computers examined, the interior is of similar class. Easy to access PCI and ISA slots, as well as RAM slots. The only spot of trouble comes in the form of the CD-ROM drive, located under the metal strip.

suitably impressive. Featuring two spare DIMM slots for RAM, three PCI slots and two ISA slots, the Legend 7170 had got room to handle those upgrades a few months down the track. With a relatively large casing and plenty of room inside, the inner workings shouldn't be too intimidating to the average user.

Gameworthy

Much on par with the Acer Aspire, the Legend 7170 is a perfect family PC but a little too weak for the gaming enthusiast. The reasons? Small monitor, limited RAM, and most importantly, the combination 2D/3D video card used. Armed with some know-how and a hefty bank balance, the Legend 7170 is upgrade friendly.

OVERALL





You are in command of the
MechWarriors® of Zulu Company.
On the planet below,
they await your orders.

Each decision you make,
each parry and feint, bears
consequence. You hesitate and the
recruit you nurtured into an
experienced MechWarrior is lost.
His death a stunning blow. The
calls for back up, the missile
impacts, the pilot's final scream.
All play loud and clear.

Retrieve the survivors and
their 'Mechs®. Repair and refit
what you can. Move your best
MechWarriors into the best 'Mechs.
Or add a new pilot.
The next mission beckons.

This is MechCommander.
You will know what it is
to command.



- Should you give your Elite MechWarriors long range weapons and play it safe? Or send them into the fray and trust their skills and your tactics to get them back alive?



- Command up to 12 MechWarriors against dozens of enemy 'Mechs, Elementals, and armored vehicles.
- Buy new 'Mechs, weapons and pilots to create a unit to your specifications. Use salvage from the battlefield or trade-in what you don't need.



- The most animation in game history guarantees off-the-scale visual effects.
- 30 in-depth missions.
- Full multiplayer network capability.





You will have a plan.

You will be right.

You will be wrong. You will love your troops.

You will curse their names.

You will panic.

You will attempt the impossible.

You will pull it off.

You will hesitate.

You will respect your enemy.

You will pay the price.

You will be defeated.

You will face your fear.

You will act on instinct.

You will be exalted.

You will ask for a second chance.

You will know what it is to command.

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WHERE DO GAMES COME FROM?

Games industry workers in profile, part 6. *by Brenda Garneau*



THE MARKETING GUY: JIM VEEVAERT

"Build it and they will come"

Marketing folks like Jim Veevaert would like this to be so with games, but it isn't and the good word needs to be spread. Getting the game into your brain is his job, here, we get into his...

PCPP: What do you think of the stereotype marketing people carry?

JV: One of my personal crusades has been to overcome that stereotype. My background consisted of playing games at an early age, and I was fascinated with computers early on as well. In fact I'm one of the 350 people that

bought a Tandy 2000 in 1985. This was the only non-DOS compatible machine in existence outside of the Apple systems. In college, I received a dual degree in computer programming and became quite efficient at Assembly language programming. I have a good sense of what's involved in designing and programming a game, and as a result, I'm very sympathetic to the cause. All the developers I've ever worked with sense this immediately, and it usually helps to level the waters between divisions. I get just as annoyed at stereotypical developers who don't have enough sense about them to be aware of the competition. They're

known as "development chimps." I figured I needed a counter to "the marketing weasel."

PCPP: Pick any product you have worked on or are working on. For those who are interested in marketing, can you walk us through the stages of marketing it?

JV: Well, Lords of Magic is a game that we shipped in early December. Of course, it was due in late August. The first step is to identify the product's position, as I mentioned before. This process can take weeks and should go on until there is unilateral agreement between development and marketing as to the precise

As with most creatures from the marketing species, Jim "King of all marketing" Veevaert is an unassuming and modest person

positioning of a product. The next step involves collecting any materials, such as early screen shots or conceptual art, and selecting a design firm or agency. There are several other things that usually take place at this time, kicking off potential OEM deals and peripheral cross promotion deals, but that would require a lot of additional detail to explain those processes. After briefing the design firm, the next phase is to work with the agency to develop a communications strategy. The communications strategy becomes the blueprint from which all marketing materials will be created. The packaging, the ads, and any point of purchase materials need to all deliver the same message.

PCPP: Now, how has the Internet affected the way we market games?

JV: In many ways, it's the greatest opportunity for Marketing, yet at the same time, it's done a lot to confuse the situation. The Web is unlimited, and so are the choices on where to invest your online marketing dollars. One of the good points is that it enables you to modify your messaging immediately, and it's an incredible device for product demo distribution. Some of our games can reach nearly a million downloads. Where could you ever get free distribution on a mil-

"The communications strategy becomes the blueprint from which all marketing materials will be created. The packaging, the ads, and any point of purchase materials need to all deliver the same message."

lion CD demos for a product without having to include AOL in some form or another?

The Internet has also been the genesis of a new marketing development known as Digital Branding. For example, there are over 50 Half-Life web sites in existence and the product hasn't even been released yet. These are known as "fan" sites as they are designed, developed and maintained by members of our core gaming audience. They've created these sites out of a love for the product. What's interesting is that they are not only fans, but they feel that in some way they are co-owners as well. The Internet enables them to provide feedback to us on a regular basis empowering these fan-site owners to become co-creators of the games. This process of digital branding is so important to us that it is part of our mission statement in that we challenge ourselves and our audience to join us on our journey to create the highest quality computer entertainment.

PCPP: While every gamer may clamour to develop games, the reality is that few have the ability to design or develop one. Marketing, however, seems to be a bit more receptive. First, is that accurate? Secondly, do you actually work with developers to mould the product?



JV: No it isn't accurate. The easiest job to get in this business is a position in QA. There is a constant need for new faces to test products. QA also becomes the minor leagues when it's time to bring new talent into development. I would say that 70-80% of the game designers in the industry got their start in QA. For those seeking to become game developers, with enough hard work, at some point, they will get a chance to move up the ladder. It's frustrating from a marketing point of view since a lot of these game designers are very junior and very undisciplined. However,

recent trends in the industry are demanding better products, so I think a lot of these unfocused individuals will have new careers before they know it. In marketing, I'm looking for people that have a solid business background, yet they need to be very passionate about the gaming industry as well. It's a hard match to find, but it's a recipe for success. A lot of people think it's easy to get in, but that is far from the truth. There are opportunities to get in as an assistant or as an administrator, but becoming a successful marketing manager takes a lot of work and dedication.

PCPP: In your opinion, what are the three things that will make or break a game. How do you, as the marketing man, make certain these criteria are met?

JV: Unless a product is a sequel, the most important element is that it's original. It really needs to bring about something new and fresh to an overcrowded, over cloned market. However, that's a tough determination to make. It's very difficult for designers to come up with that "new" look and feel that comes off like the greatest gaming experience. So my first thing is originality.

Secondly, gameplay balance is essential.

You can have an original concept that looks great and sounds great. If the play balance isn't there, then the game falls apart. Play balancing usually takes months and sometimes years to get right.

The third element that can make or break a game is the bug status. We set out with these very big goals, and we establish a ship date that's 5 months beyond what we're acknowledging as realistic. Game development is like reinventing the wheel every time. There is constant flow of unknowns. Bugs can emerge a day before a product ships, and sometimes can break the code so badly that, out of frustration, it makes its way out the door with the assumption that a patch download will fix everything. This is another one of my crusades: to set it up so that games are shipped only when they are ready and 99% bug free. Expecting that your gaming audience will be satisfied with downloading a patch is completely the wrong approach. In some cases, it means the certain death of a game.

PCPP: What's the best way to get your foot in the door of a gaming company's marketing department?

JV: Send your checks for \$100.00 payable to Jim Veevaert c/o Sierra Studios in Seattle, Wa. Just kidding. [Laughs] First of all, decide if you really have a passion for this business, and remember that I can't be fooled. Life is short, so you might as well be doing whatever it is that feeds your heart and soul. Secondly, be open to internships, and be willing to take an entry-level position. I'm very good at observing everyone's working attitude and aptitude. I like to promote talented individuals quickly, and I seek to develop individuals with a strong pursuit of perfection. In fact, I recently pushed someone into a new position even though they had no idea that they were qualified to do it. I want to surround myself with people that are gunning for my job. It's the only way to ensure that I'm working with the best and most ambitious people around.

THE STATS

Name: Jim Veevaert, King of all Marketing (self proclaimed)

Age: 35

Company: Sierra Studios

Where before: Interplay Productions

Current Project: Branding Sierra Studios (with marketing, not a cattle prod. Although there are times...)

Years in Gaming Industry: 5 years

Years in Marketing: 9 years

Training: Degree in marketing communications, computer science, and entertainment marketing for Warner records, Disney Home Video

Average week: I haven't had an average week in 5 years. If it's less than 50 hours, I feel guilty.

During crunch: Is there anything else? :)

Usually 60 - 70 hours....in a row

Your job motto: A lousy game can't be saved by great marketing, but poor marketing is all it takes to kill a great game... Okay my real motto is: Marketing is a philosophy, not a department

THE MIND

"The 64 thousand dollar question, which of course turns out to be more like \$464,000, goes like this: '(Insert your product here) is the only game that does WHAT for whom?'. This question usually goes unanswered for the entire development life of a game, and sometimes long after a game hits the budget bin. It's a great one to ask because almost no one takes the time to research this adequately, yet it's the foundation upon which a successful product is launched. This knowledge, or the ability to get this knowledge, is the most important skill that marketing professionals can have. Learn to master this ability, and you'll never need to look for a job, as the lack of this talent literally brings game companies to their knees begging for mercy from the press and pleading for just another week of shelf space at retail."

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Be familiar with all genres in the gaming market - Strategy, Adventure, Action, RPG, Simulations, etc. If you don't understand your products, your audience never will.
- Be able to play the best games in each of these genres, enough so that you can carry on a solid dialog with a development professional. Being in marketing you already have one strike against you in the eyes of product development.
- Understand and be very familiar with the competition for your product line. Another way of answering that big question: How does your game differ from all the others?

WHAT SKILLS YOU WILL NEED

Budgeting: You must, I repeat MUST, become an expert in Excel or some form of budgeting software. If a product fails at retail and it comes to the bottom line, responsibility becomes the plague in a fast hurry. Marketing will blame development for the quality of the game, and development will blame the failure on inefficient marketing. If this happens, and you're over budget, then you'll have a great chance at a new career:



Print production comprehension: Understand the processes that printers go through to design the pieces needed to market your product. I have had cases where the night before film was due at the printer, someone at the film-house messed up wildly. Typically, it's someone new, and their first job is prepping your film. However, the new film guy accidentally erased your masterfile, and he needs you to come down to the lab tonight to tell him what color, DPI (dots-per-inch or resolution), etc. Unfortunately, I speak from painful experience. And, like bad history, it loves to repeat itself.

Creative Agency Management: You know the guy that just messed up your film? Well, it turns out that he was able to get his friend a job at the agency you've worked with for the past four years. The former art director there, who you co-created all those brilliant packages and ads with has left to pursue a career in the movie business. Now, you're suddenly stuck with a junior art director. You need a box and ads, and you need them in 3 weeks. It takes confidence and strong management skills to develop a vision for a product, and then to see it through, even while a bad agency could be working against you.

their vision into a great interactive experience. If they sense that you don't share 1/10 of their enthusiasm, then they will spend their remaining hours making your life very difficult.

Excellent communication skills: Communication is everything in this business. There is a constant demand to draft message strategies, memos to the sales staff, and of course the endless threads of email that one needs to respond to. People will harshly judge you depending on how well you communicate. At times, it may be necessary to speak in front of 200 sales reps, or worse yet, 200 developers, and the only tools you have will be your ability to communicate and a Power-Point presentation. The pressure is on when you consider that 7-second rule. Be clear, be concise, and be confident.

Understand the power of good PR (public relations): This is a big one. Learning how to synchronize with PR completes the picture in a successful marketing campaign. The difference between marketing and PR is that the marketing department is responsible for getting the message to the consumer through retail channels and through advertising. PR gets the message to

"People that read the gaming magazines can readily forget a bad ad (I hope) and even a bad package. But a scathing review is detrimental at retail and seldom forgotten"

Retail & channel distribution understanding: This is great knowledge to have before pursuing a job in entertainment marketing. If you don't have it, I guarantee at some point you will need to. On average, a sales representative and a retail chain buyer have a 7-second attention span. Literally. In addition, they only choose to read bold type.

Be a Gamer: How can you market a product that you don't personally enjoy? It's not essential that you are a gamer, but it makes all the difference to the psychologically disturbed individuals that you'll most likely be working with. Artists, programmers, and designers spend up to 60 hours a week attempting to translate

the consumer through the press. It's that simple, but both require very unique skill sets. There have been many occasions where ad campaigns, and even game boxes, have been very poorly produced. At the same time, a well executed PR plan can take a miscommunicated message from marketing, shape it and deliver a home run to the press. People that read the gaming magazines can readily forget a bad ad (I hope) and even a bad package. But a scathing review is detrimental at retail and seldom forgotten. It's up to PR to manage the expectations of the press and how the press will preview and review our games. Developing an integrated message strategy between PR and marketing is the best equation for success in this business.



S p a r o

I N F I N I T E S T O R A G E



June 1998.



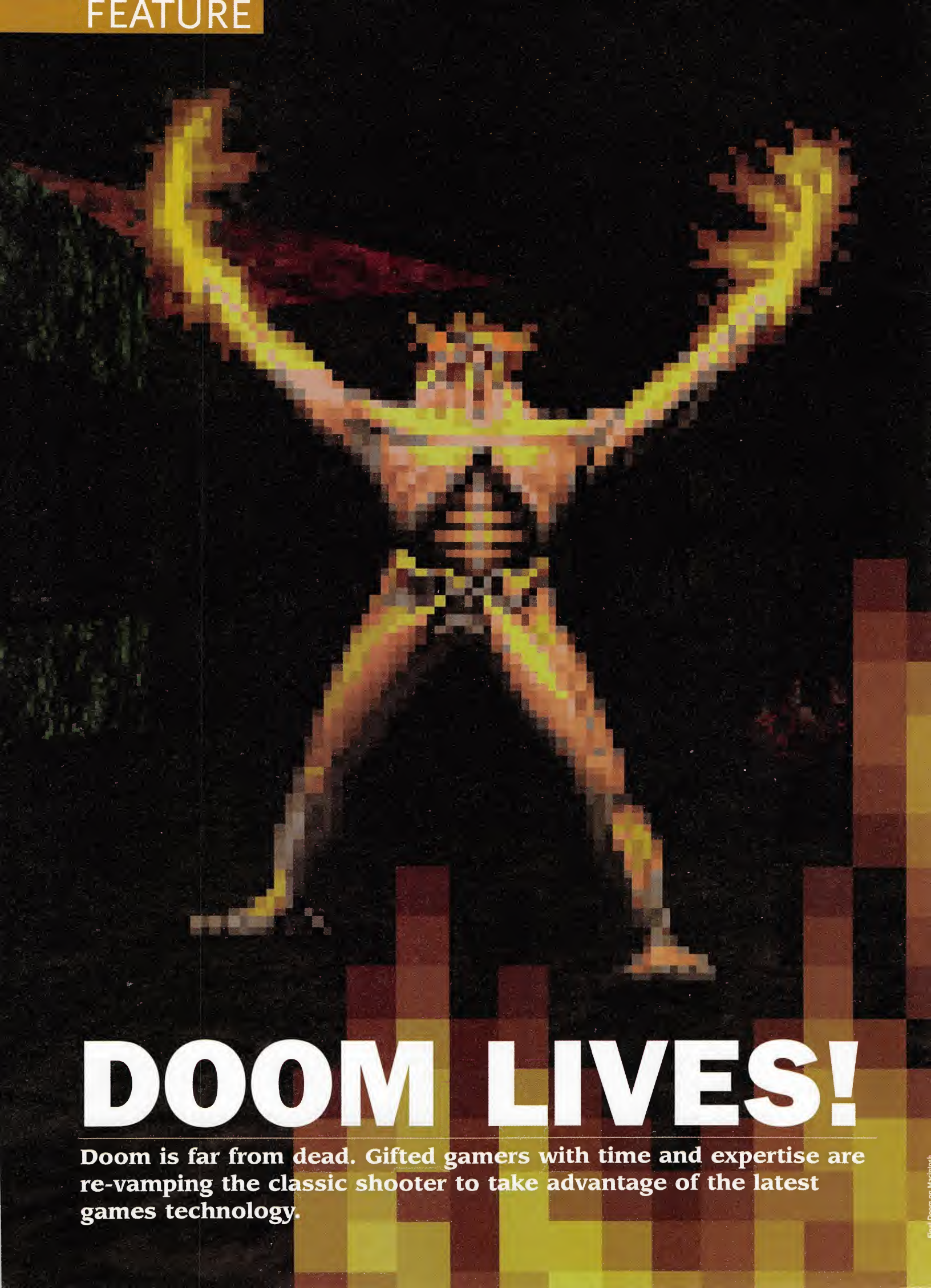
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DOOM LIVES!

Doom is far from dead. Gifted gamers with time and expertise are re-vamping the classic shooter to take advantage of the latest games technology.



Ever since the release of the entire Doom source code back in December '97, a few Doom disciples have put their valuable coding hours into creating something new from the old. The task is a noble one: make Doom compare favourably against 3D games of today while still retaining the essence of what is arguably still the best 3D shooter to hit the market. Most are focusing on improving the engine to offer higher resolutions, more players etc. Some are simply adding in all the things that they want to see in the original Doom, like Capture the Flag.

Why bother?

Why is Doom back? Can the release of the source code really inspire so much effort into revamping an essentially dated game in technological terms? If it were any other game then the source code would be nothing more than a fancy manuscript for some geeks to look at and say, 'oooh'. But this is the game that launched a thousand clones, and there are people out there who are still playing it, not to mention all those people who still revere it as the game that made them upgrade to that sweet, sweet 486. The game had class, the enemies had character, and the music is still better than most techno music today. Whatever the reason, Doom still has and probably will always have its appeal. Here is a selection of what's out there today:



DOSDoom

URL: www.frag.com/dosdoom

By: Andy Baker/Chi Hoang

Current Version: 0.64

Downloadable: Yes

DOSDoom is an effort to port the source code that was released for Linux in December to DOS, and add a few tasty features in for the ride.

DOSDoom does high resolution and high colour, translucency, mlook (using your mouse to look up and down), and DeHackEd files (modifications to the way the weapons and other items in Doom function like increased fire rates). DOSDoom also supports MOD and MP3 files as well as CD tracks.

WinDoom and glDoom

URL: www.frag.com/doom

By: Bruce Lewis

Current Version: WinDoom 0.96a; glDoom unreleased

Downloadable: WinDoom yes; glDoom no

These are two separate projects written by the same guy who obviously has way too much time on his hands. WinDoom is Doom ported to Windows95 using the Win32 SDK and DirectX 5. This means it will run natively under Win95 with no dropping to DOS, and no device configuration. It should also network nicely and we all hope that this code will be turned into a dedicated server that runs TCP/IP. QuakeWorld look out!

glDoom is a version of Doom that uses OpenGL as the renderer as opposed to software. This will use a polygon based renderer instead of Doom's span, or line based renderer. glDoom is not necessarily a whole new game, just Doom with a different renderer. In fact the only features of note that will make it to Version 1.0 are mlook, transparency, translucency and dynamic lighting. A limited viewable weapons dealie will also be included, but it will only be like Duke 3D's viewable weapons, ie, a floating icon above a player's head. Better than nothing I suppose.

The CD is Doomed!

All these lovely Doom addons are on the cover CD. Look in the \Doom directory. Read any help files that come with each addon, as you're on your own with these - no PowerPlay tech support for these betas! We knew you'd understand. Please note that you'll need the full commercial version of Doom, but if you're a gamer, you'd have that, wouldn't you...





Legacy is the king of conversions. The feature list is mind-boggling! CTF Doom!



Doom Legacy

URL: <http://www.frag.com/doomlegacy/>

By: Denis Fabrice & Pereira Boris

Current Version: 1.22

Downloadable: Yes

Probably the coolest of them all, Doom Legacy is doing things to Doom that has only been dreamed of in those wee few hours that gamers have to sleep. The guys at Doom Legacy have a simple philosophy: Keep Doom simple, fast and don't change the gameplay. When millions of gamers worldwide agree that Doom is the king of gameplay and atmosphere, keeping them on side by

enhancing Doom rather than totally modifying it sounds like a good idea to me. The new features that Doom Legacy offers are too numerous to mention, but the most droolworthy are: 32 player deathmatch (Yes, thirty-two. Count em. Count em again. Now die happy), translucency, transparency, setup and deathmatch menu, a Quake-style console, the ability to jump and walk over and under things, light shading, translucent water and multiple floors like Dark Forces or Duke 3D. There are also some fantastic deathmatch levels on this site that are most worthy of a solid few hours of gaming by you and a few keen friends.



A miracle of modern technology! Look up & down in Doom! Amazing...



Stay Doomed

If you want to keep up with all the latest Doom news (sounds a bit contradictory, really) then the following sites will prove invaluable to help keep your gaming retro, but hip.

DoomGate

doomgate.cs.buffalo.edu/doomgate

Arguably the place where it all began, pre-Blue's, pre-PlanetQuake, this site was probably the forerunner to game fan sites that are all too common now. It's still running and keeping the Doom community informed about all the latest Doom news.



Doomworld

www.doomworld.com

Another site hosting news, information and Doom developments.

The Original MacDoom Page

www.eecs.wsu.edu/~rkinion/macdoom.html

If you own one of those infernal machines that refuses to die, then this site will keep you happy. It's also probably more current than the other sites considering Doom II was released on the Mac not too long ago :)

The Official Doom FAQ

doomgate.cs.buffalo.edu/docs/FAQ/doomfaq

Older than time itself, this is the site of the official Doom FAQ by Hank Leukart, arguably the guy who kicked off game fan sites and game FAQ's (maybe that's a tall claim, but the guy's got cred, ok). Blue's et al owe this guy a beer or two...

CTFDoom

URL: www.captured.com/ctfdoom

By: John Cole/Chi Hoang

Current Version: 0.8

Downloadable: Yes

CTFDoom is a most righteous effort to bring Capture the Flag to the old school. It's being developed by John Cole who is basing it on Chi Hoang's DOSDoom (see previous). Some of the nifty enhancements it adds to DOSDoom are the new CTF status bars, a timed game mode, enhanced power-ups, dropping weapons when killed and speech to notify you if a flag has been captured or returned. You can download it now from the website as well as a few CTF maps to try it out on.

George Argy



The first tactical sim^{with} intense turn-based and real-time combat.

It's the year 3569.

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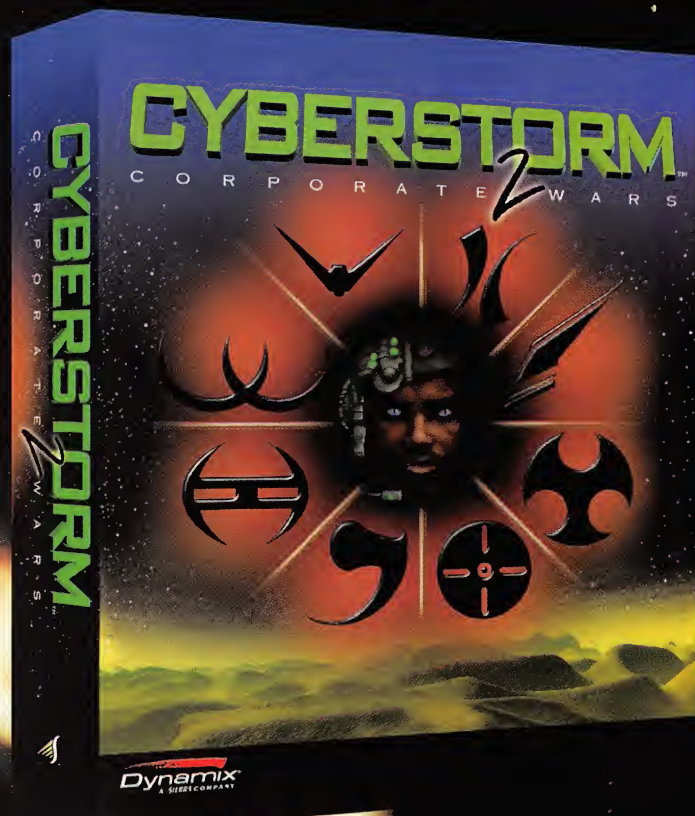
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STATE OF PLAY

When's it coming out? What's it like? What are they doing next? What the hell's going on!

Adventure/RPG

David Wildgoose

Every gamer secretly longs to one day design and write their own game. And it will be the perfect game, of course, the amalgamation of all those times when you've said to yourself, "Now, why didn't they do it this way?". Holding us back from doing so, sadly, is that few of us have the time nor the inclination to learn how to program properly. Fiddling with the *Bard's Tale Construction Set* or *HOMM2* map editor is only partially satisfying. Thankfully, there are plenty of people who realise these facts and have decided to give assistance to us lazy bastards by producing some extremely useful game creation software.

Many have been around for a while in the form of various text adventure utilities like TADS and are in a constant state of refinement



and enhancement (check out sites like <http://interactfiction.miningco.com> and <http://www.xyzynews.com> for more info). I would advise anyone with a passing interest in such games to check them out - you might be surprised at just how sophisticated they are. Two of the most popular types of adventure games in PC history have been the *Ultima* series and Sierra's *Quest* titles. Not unexpectedly, then, there are a number of programs that allow you to create similarly-styled games. With *Questmaker* (http://www.gamersinn.com/library_files/download/g/quest21.zip) you can recreate the fun of *King's Quest*, while the designers of the good Adventure Creation Kit (visit <ftp://ftp.smartlink.net/pub/users/hopkins/ack22.zip>) were obviously infatuated with *Ultima IV*.

More advanced adventures are possible thanks to the recent release of Verge - excellent if you want to make your own console RPG like *Zelda* (<http://moria.vivid.com/vecna> is worth a visit just to read the rather amusing disclaimer). The clever people at DC Games (<http://www.dcgames.com>) have been working on a kit that enables you to render a more complicated RPG, looking much like *Ultima VI* in the shot above. Possibly the most impressive of all is currently being created on Sydney's North Shore. Aimed at developers and non-developers alike, Twilight Software (see <http://www.twilightsoftware.com>) are working on an engine for designing quality first-person slide-show graphical adventures (the *Myst* genre, if you like). I hope to speak with them soon to find out how they're getting on.

Now, go forth and create!

Action

George Argy

For those people who were tracking the progress of *Riot: Mobile Armor* and are now wondering why they can't find it on the web any more - it's changed its name. It will now be released as *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division* which the boys at Monolith feel is a much more descriptive name. Either way, this game is looking hot even in development and promises to blend Anime and a little bit of the Mech side of things into a 3D shooter.

Wondering why there are almost no *Unreal* servers around? That's probably because internet performance at 28.8k, quite frankly, sucks. Epic are working hard to fix the severely lagged internet play as well as adding OpenGL support and Voodoo2 multi-



texturing. Hopefully, a patch should be out by the time you read this. A shareware version is also in the works.

Something that came across my desk that looks bizarre enough to actually be good is *Giants*, a 3D shooter/strategy combo (how many times have we heard that before?) *Giants* is being developed by the team that brought the world *MDK* and looks like a hell of a lot of fun. You take control of one of three races of creatures, each with different attributes and attempt to destroy your opponent by using the natural resources around you, including the native flora, fauna and even the land itself.

Activision has some *Heavy Gear 2* screenshots up on their website and you are sincerely urged to check them out, as they look absolutely fantastic. This game looks set to seriously put *Mechwarrior* to shame.

Rebel Boat Rocker have announced a 3D shooter called *PraxWar*. Set in 2032, a megalomaniac called Dante (no, not Elexis) has taken over Prax industries and is developing an army of mutants who are wreaking havoc. You are a member of the Eclipse Team, a five person squad, and your mission is to destroy the mutants and take out Dante. Sound Sinfully familiar to you?

Finally, in a surprise move, 3D Realms are switching to the Unreal engine instead of the Quake II engine to complete *Duke Nukem Forever*.

Strategy

Peter Sharpe

There's no point letting those once fine and dandy games start collecting dust on the shelf. Time to change some levels and spice things up a bit. For those with litres of creative juices, the makers of two big strategy games have released nifty level editors. First being SSI's "Sorry no expansion pack - ever" **Warhammer: Final Liberation**. Head over to www.warhammer.ssionline.com and download the cute, but tricky to use editor. If customizing space marines and orcs isn't your thing, maybe the narcotic addictiveness of **X-COM Apocalypse** is more to your liking. Mythos Games (www.mythosgames.com) have released a map design utility for their classic game. Better pack lots of caffeine and sugar for the late nights on this one.



Dungeon Keeper the game that defined vaporware delays, and ended up not being quite as awesome as it should have been is going to receive the follow up treatment. Apart from the usual sequel promises of improved graphics, more monsters etc etc, the designers have promised to overhaul the poor combat system in the first game. No more just dumping all your monsters on one space and hoping for the best, this time skill and excitement will be involved. Look for a release sometime around the arrival of **Falcon 4.0**.

Another popular game to get the number two treatment is **Myth**. Bit of a cult classic this one, especially amongst the dedicated online players over there at Bungee.net. As well as increasing the graphics baboom baboom of the first game, look forward to the laying of siege to castles (with working drawbridges) and enclosed battles in indoor arenas. The new multiplayer mode "Choke the Chicken" sounds worthy for the price of admission alone. Ahh but for the sweet smell of burning chook, courtesy of a dwarven Molotov Cocktail.

Enjoying your copy of the **Total Annihilation** expansion pack? Awesome stuff, but spare a thought for UK based TA fans who have been inflicted with two botched releases of **Core Contingency**. Missions that don't work, faulty multiplayer maps are two of the main problems that crept through the quality control department (twice??) at the Blighty CD Duplicators. Just goes to show alcohol and Crack Cocaine at the work place just don't mix. Until next month, here's hoping **C&C2** sees Kane conquer the world without a tank rush in sight.

Sims

Maj. Ian Lindgren

I won't mention **Falcon 4.0**, but I hope Ben does in his E3 report! Remember a couple of months ago I told you of a possible Israeli Air Force flight sim to be developed by Jane's? It will be called **World Air Power: Israeli Air Force** and is due for release in November. It will feature six campaigns and include a mixture of US and Israeli aircraft such as the Phantom 2000, F-15, F-16, Kfir and Israel's own Lavi, a next-generation fighter.

The big news from Jane's is that they plan to launch a digital battlefield series to include a naval sim, **Fleet Command**, and integrate it with **688i Hunter Killer**. What's more, the word is that an F18 sim is also under development to add a third dimension. This con-



cept promises to be a killer on a LAN!

NovaLogic plan to mix it with Jane's and release **F-16 Viper** and **MiG-29 Fulcrum** late in the year. F16 is touted to include an innovative zoom tactical display capability that will allow the pilot magnify any MFD while simultaneously keeping a wary eye on the HUD. Sounds good! So do over 40 dynamically constructed single-player missions and several campaigns. A former Russian cosmonaut and test pilot is developing MiG29. It will include a variety of modern-day campaigns set in Malaysia, Nigeria, the Middle East and parts of the CIS Republic.

On the prop front, Jane's is in the spotlight again, advising that they too will have a WWII flight sim known as **Fighter Legends** out by the end of the year! SSI is also developing a game that traces the evolution of the Luftwaffe from the Spanish Civil War to its destruction in WWII to be named **Luftwaffe Commander**. Personally I can't believe all this; it'll keep me busy for months reviewing these sims! Bad luck hey!

Change the scene and hug the trees. MicroProse is intending to develop **Gunship III** using the **M1 Tank Platoon 2** engine. No release date as yet; I'd say mid next year. Closer to the ground, another M1A2 tank sim is on the way. This time from Interactive Magic and is named **Spearhead!** It's due out in October (a big month for games!). I hope they do a better job than SSI's **Tank Commander**. Read my review this month and weep!

Online

Gareth Jones

Ah, the golden gaming glory that is online multiplayer gaming. At its best, there's very little that's better, so what's happening this month in our cloistered little world? Well, for one the brou-ha-ha over AOL's take over of ICQ has prompted Brainscan Interactive to get moving on a clone of their own, called EGN.

What would be better than ICQ? How about an ICQ clone that is created from the ground up for gamers? It's called EGN, and you still get online status, messaging and stats as with ICQ, but along with this you also can spawn an ftp server to exchange files with your friends, voice communication (if you have a duplex soundcard/modem), and a latency indicator so you know who is



suitable to play with. On top of this, you also have access to launching games from the EGN application, including command line parameters and skins for games such as Quake, Unreal and so on. It's still in beta stages at present, but it's still well worth a look. Head over to www.entr.net for information and downloads.

Fans of the weird and wacky, but undeniably cute Settlers series will be overjoyed to hear that Settlers 3 will be multiplayerable on a large scale - up to 32 players simultaneously using Bluebyte's dedicated server. Well, it's not actually set in stone for 32 players at a time, but Bluebyte are showing a great attitude towards online gaming, and should be congratulated for it. Not all companies have the same attitude though, and one of the worst offenders is EA. Not only do we still not have a local server for UO, but their sports games have always been undersupported for TCP/IP play. If you're a FIFA fan, then head over to www.fifa99.net/forum/ to let them know how you feel - they will be watching the forum for ideas about FIFA99; many thanks to Matt Holme for the tip!

If sports sims aren't your cup of tea, then you could always try the Battlezone-without-the-resource-management game, Wulfram. It's still in Beta as we go to print, but already looks great, a 32 player futuristic tank sim with some lovely 3Dfx graphics. www.ten.net/games/wulfram for all the info.

1998 REPORT

The year ahead in games and technology.

By Ben Mansill & Steve Boxer

E3, otherwise known as the Electronic Entertainment Expo, otherwise known as the annual Mecca for the games industry. Pack 60,000 developers, publishers, retailers and journalists into the Georgia Dome for 3 days and let them go wild.

Developers spend half their time manning their stand and giving the same speech dozens of times each day, with the other half spent wandering around checking out the opposition -

usually with video camera in hand for deeper analysis later, back in the lab.

Publishers run around trying to gain distribution rights for the hottest new games, retailers get grovelled to by most of the above, as do we humble journos. It's a fine time. A time of new games, and excited developers, most of whom are unable to hide their disappointment at discovering that their game doesn't look quite as cutting edge as they had thought.

Attendance is essential if you

take games seriously. We do and so PowerPlay was there in force.

What's new, or not?

Each E3 seems to have a distinct feel. Last year it was the realisation for many, previously ignorant, that 3D accelerators are a mighty force indeed. This year it's again 3D accelerators - I only saw one 3D game that was software only and most first-person shooters didn't even bother with a fall-back software mode. The other standout aspect of the 1998 E3 was that... there wasn't one. It



was hard work trying to find new games. Most had been seen the previous year, slated for release that Christmas. They're still there, they look just the same as they did last year and they're still coming out for Christmas. Bastards.

The Games



(above top to bottom) *European Air War*, *Combat Flight Simulator*, *Fighter Legends*

All is not doom and gloom though. For those games which did stand out, did so spectacularly. Over the coming months we'll be telling you about the good stuff that's heading your way, but for now, here's the highlight reel:

Flight Sims

Last year was the year of the Flight Sim. So is this year, for not one of the sims slated for Christmas 1997 actually got released. They're all looking good for this Christmas, according to most marketing departments...

Most novel and intriguing is surely EA's **World Air Power: Israeli Air Force**. Developed in Israel by ex-Air Force staff, the sim features aircraft seen only in the IAF. These include the highly modified Phantom 2000 and the home-grown Kfir. Scenarios will include most of Israel's his-



torical clashes. Top fun and a new and different flight sim experience. Also from EA and looking good is **Fighter Legends**. One of several WWII sims and just a bit more arcade than the others. Very pretty though - the 3D virtual cockpit is outstanding.

Activision's **Screaming Demons Over Europe** is the most technically advanced of the WWII sims, and offers the most thorough WWII experience. The attention to detail is simply astounding. Shell casings are ejected from under the wing as guns are fired, landing gear collapses progressively depending on the ground surface and impact speed, the 3D

aircraft are truly 3D - it is possible to look completely through certain bombers, in through the nose gunner's window, out through the rear gunner's position. Oh, and you may have heard the phrase "Hit Bubbles" when discussing flight sims. This refers to the breakdown of areas of the aircraft. In the old days it was all one big hit bubble. These days, wings and fuselage are modelled separately. Now, Activision have managed to give the pilots

hit bubbles! Not just the one either, hit a limb and the plane will likely turn back, but get a good head shot and you can add the plane to your kill list! Ultimately cool.

Microsoft too have a very appealing couple of sims in the works. **Fighter Ace** we've seen before, it's the brilliant online sim designed for the Internet Gaming Zone. Amazing fun and just the right balance between realism and approachability, but we'll just have to wait for an Asia Pacific Zone server for this, won't we? Elsewhere on the Microsoft horizon is **Microsoft Combat Flight Simulator**. Based on the wildly successful MS Flight Sim engine, this campaign-based sim offers full import/export



capabilities for existing MS Flight Sim products. So yes, that means you can dogfight a Spitfire against an A300 Airbus. MS Flight Sim's advanced "Adventure" planning capability should allow for some extremely interesting scenario design.

Microprose again showed **Falcon 4.0** and **European Air War** - both of which still look fantastic, neither of which will probably ever be released... Christmas is actually likely for both, which indeed makes 1998 already a vintage year for flight sims.

Driving

There are only four new driving games that you need to worry about. There are more, but all the rest are, for want of a better term; boring arcade crap.

First up is **Powerslide**. I've rattled on about this elsewhere and we are doing a big preview of this breakthrough title next month. Once you've seen and played it you will understand. **Powerslide** is a totally new class of driving game. The world and the vehicles are true 3D - not a first, but what **Powerslide**'s programmers have managed to do is develop a physics engine that allows for driving that is... real. Instead of the traditional vector-based driving model; where



programmers calculate factors like G-force and tire grip based on a complex and predetermined set of parameters, **Powerslide** instead gives you an independently suspended off-roader and from there it's up to you. The cars bounce off sand dunes, ties hit the sand, bite, and the car, complete with drift and wheelspin, catapults forward. It's real. You're driving a real 3D object around, not an algorithm. Much more on this extremely exciting new game next issue.

From Codemasters, the gods who gave us **TOCA Touring Car Championship** comes the even more impressive **Colin McRae Rally**. Like **TOCA**, **McRae** is amazingly hard, but it also feels just right. The world has always needed a high quality rally game and at last we've got it. The sensation of speed is unbelievable - you'll need super-fast reflexes and a true sense of what an overpowered turbo car is likely to do in the dirt when pushed to the limit.

Further away from the traditional hard-thrash racer is **Interstate 82** from Activision. The all new 3D engine looks great and runs much smoother than its' predecessors', but that's not even half the story. As with **Interstate 76**, you'll be called upon to engage in armed auto combat, but also



Top 5 of E3

Surrounded - indeed, overwhelmed by hundreds of new games, how is one to distil it all down to a mere 'Top 5'? Easy, most were mediocre and ordinary, those that stood out were clearly superior in every respect. Here's my pick for the best of E3 1998.

1. Powerslide

Emergent/GTI

Not because it's Australian, not because I personally love a good driving game, but because **Powerslide** was simply the best new game at E3. The quality of the dynamics, the fully 3D cars, the fastest 3D engine in the world, the sounds, the feel of driving and the brilliance of multiplayer racing. And more. Makes the **Need for Speed** series look like a sick joke.



2. Wheel of Time

GTI

Based on the fantasy novels - but who really cares about that, this Unreal engined game defies easy description. It's a 1st-person shooter, but you can do a rapid zoom-out to an overhead view of the 3D world, placing and re-arranging walls strategically, placing troops and giving them orders and the like. Then zoom back in and run around shooting. Those easily impressed by pretty, sparkly graphic effects will peak, for **Wheel of Time** is completely over the top in this respect.



3. Interstate '82

Activision

Sequel to the most under-rated game of last year and way, way cool. Drive around in the all new 3D engine shooting bad guys and jumping canyons, drive through town, park, get out and wander around, Quake-style, with a handgun! Now this is what we really want! The virtual world is just a little bit closer. Can't wait for the soundtrack!



4. C&C: Tiberium Sun

Westwood/Virgin

Well thank God it's actually good, is all I can say. Westwood had more than just their reputation hanging on **Tiberium Sun** - and it delivers. Traditional RTS action with a heavy reliance on nice lighting and cool seismic rippling ground effects. Trains roll around tracks, unrelated to gameplay, random asteroid showers, awesome base defenses, huge maps, our old friends GDI and NOD. Come home to papa, we're ready.



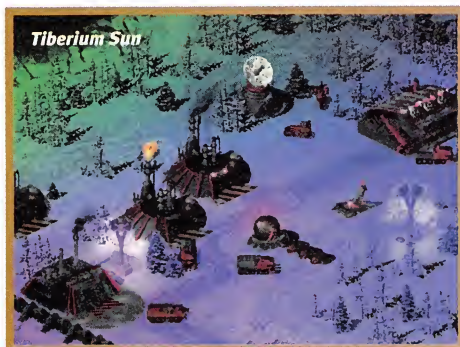
5. Star Trek: Birth of the Federation

Microprose

It caught my eye, and a closer look revealed that, yes, this is a sci-fi galactic conquest strategy game with scientific research and epic space combat.

Tentatively, fearing the worst, I asked the question: "Is it turn based or real time?". They understand! This is turn based - this is real strategy! Think **Master of Orion 2**, but cleaned up and tweaked and beautified, but set in a **Star Trek** universe.





Strategy

Tiberium Sun. Yep, **Tiberium Sun.** It's really real. I played it. Truly! Luckily for Westwood it's good enough to satisfy just about any type of gamer. While not a next generation RTS, **Tiberium Sun** offers classic RTS gameplay with a ton of tweaks and cool bits.

Unlike **Starcraft**'s running battles of continuous attack, **Tiberium Sun** gravitates towards heavy base defenses and siege-style warfare. Plenty of incidental effects regularly get your attention, like a train that trundles around the map for

no reason whatsoever, random meteor showers and highly cool earthquake effects. Thanks God they came through, eh? We should all be playing this by Christmas. They said.

Age of Empires II is a knock-out of graphical beauty, and should also come through with the gameplay goods. There's a big preview elsewhere in this issue, check it out.

I was also lucky enough to see a private and very sneak preview of **Dark Reign II**. While extremely early days, the team is dedicated to producing an entirely new class of strategy game. I can't say much at this point - mainly because preliminary design is still underway, but it's unlike any strategy game you've seen before. All 3D and fully explorable, the new **Dark Reign** will take the same cutting edge approach as that of the original, but should be an easier and more enjoyable play-experience.

Real strategy returns with **Star Trek: Birth of the Federation**. This is turn-based, empire building, scientific researching, diplomatic strategy. Yep, **Master of Orion 2**, but **Star Trek**. Many of the MOO2 team members are involved, and apart from not being able to customise the design of the spaceships due to strict Star

Trek licensing agreements (bastards!), this is the game hardcore strategy fans have been waiting for.

LucasArts **Force Commander** will probably be good - who knows? Not me. At E3 all Lucas were showing were a couple of static screen-shots. Yes, they looked very nice, but after the disaster that was **Rebellion** our faith in LucasArts' ability to produce a good strategy game is in serious doubt. From what I could gather, **Force Commander** is a traditional top-down RTS with true 3D terrain. It looked nice...

RPG

Baldur's Gate from Interplay deliberately shuns the new-style of 3D RPG and returns to the classic isometric perspective. This is an RPG designed for purists, such as our Mr Wildgoose - they hope he'll like it... We should see **Baldur's Gate** this Christmas, with a high likelihood of a big preview before then.

Conversely, **Ultima Ascension** is a radical 3D RPG with only undertones of the old school approach. The new popular 3rd-person style has been adopted for the characters, while the environment is fully 3D and very tasty looking. Unfortunately it was difficult to gauge the gameplay because it ran like a dog. The new **Ultima** - as with just about every other game demonstrated at E3, was set up on a meaty PII/400 with a million megs of RAM, but the frame rate was in the sub 10's. We shall wait, then.

It's Civilization III - except it isn't.



As I write and you read, Activision are working hard on an all new version of **Civilization**. Having picked up the rights from MicroProse (whose last blast of glory from their cash cow is **Civ II Multiplayer**), Activision are determined to both capture the essence and feel of **Civ**, but take it to the next level of advanced gameplay.

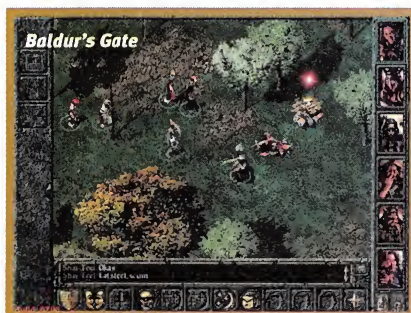
Legal shenanigans may well mean this game ends up shipping as "Call To Power", but rest assured, this is indeed a **Civ** game - one glance at the screen shots will quickly confirm this.

The Activision team are all hard core strategy gamers and their passion for the project was clear. Resisting the Real-Time trend, they identified only **Heroes of Might and Magic 2**, **Master of Orion 2** and **Warlords 3** as being the only good turn-based strategy games around (apart from **Civ**, of course). Next, they determined that everyone plays **Civ** differently. Some play the technology race, other trade and engage in active diplomacy, while others play 3-4 days of pure tank rushing. The team was keen to give these different player types what they wanted, but also to lure them into other styles of play via innovative and hopefully irresistible features. Here's some of the good stuff to be found in the new **Civ**:

- The Timeline now runs through to the year 3000AD, with plausible future-tech units and structures derived from quality science fiction.
- Intelligent waypoint setting. Also tells the player number of moves it will take to reach the destination.
- Active, automated city defenses.
- Highly advanced diplomacy settings and effects. Eg. Take out your enemy's weaker ally to reduce their trade income indirectly.
- City structure building and technological research can be automated via provided templates, or create your own - as many as you want for different styles of play.
- New and improved interface.
- Plenty of new unit and structure types - including the very cool Ecoterrorist!

The only bad news is that Activision are sticking with the diagonal/diamond pattern layout for the map grid, as opposed to the infinitely more useful straight up and down chessboard grid. They think it adds "realism". I tried so hard to convince them otherwise reader, but alas have failed you. Other than this minor blemish, this is looking good as one of the great strategy games. More soon.

Ben Mansill



First Person Action

Happy days ahead for action fans!

Ever since id Software's *Wolfenstein 3D*, the granddaddy of 'em all, first-person shoot-em-ups have evolved gradually, with each new engine or release adding a couple of features (and improved graphics) over the previous one. Judging from what was on display at E3, this process continues apace - although the first-person shooter world no longer relies exclusively on id's engine. There's still plenty for first-person shooter developers to, ahem, shoot for - scenery which doesn't scale down to large pixel blocks when you approach it, and which acts like real scenery, real-life lighting and fogging effects, truly intelligent monsters and so on. But this crop of next-generation shooters reckon they'll get closer to perfection than ever before.

Prey

Developer: 3D Realms
Publisher: GT Interactive
Due: Q2 1999

Starring Talon Brave, a "27 year-old, disenfranchised Apache Indian living in a motor-home," *Prey* will mark the debut of 3D Realms' new engine, which will also power *Duke Nukem 5*. And it's a hell of an impressive engine. Its main piece of whizzy high-tech technology is something called "portal" technology, which takes areas of space in the game and attaches them to each other, so that not only will you be able to see other areas of *Prey*'s world through a portal, but you'll also be able to shoot into it. Portal technology also allows things like real-time reflections from floors, so you'll be able to look down and see your character reflected, without having to spend thousands of dollars on a new machine. *Prey* will also be the first shooter with properly deformable scenery which obeys the laws of physics (although on some occasions it will be hard-wired to stop gamers from shooting themselves into dead-ends). Which bodes very well for the game's multi-player action.



Alien Vs Predator

Developer: Rebellion
Publisher: Fox Interactive
Due: October 1998

Where did this one come from? One struggles to see why Fox Interactive kept such a tight lid on it, as it's a real corker. As well as stunning graphics and atmospherics, it has all the coherent single-player gameplay that the likes of *Quake II* lack. In single-player, you have to work through various missions as a bog-standard marine, a Predator or a Sigourney Weaver-obsessed Alien. Naturally, as Alien, you can hang from the ceiling, stay still (to avoid registering on Predator's motion sensor) and drip acid on anything that approaches. Predator, meanwhile, has some serious weaponry and can make himself invisible. It uses British developer Rebellion's own engine, and it looks as though we'll see plenty more from them.

Prax War

Developer: Rebel Boat Rocker
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Due: March 1999

The thought of EA publishing a first-person shooter is also a revelation. This effort, from a bunch of ex-3D Realms guys, appeared to be at such an early stage that it's difficult to say whether it will cut the mustard, and that March 99 launch date may well slip. It has a military theme, with lots of sequences involving vehicles,



and some complex Transformer-style animations. A lot of it is set outdoors, the single-player game involves you drawing on the skills of fellow marines in order to complete missions and, intriguingly, the whole game is being developed in Java. Don't ask us whether it'll be any good - just be aware of its existence.

Duke Nukem Forever

Developer: 3D Realms
Publisher: GT Interactive
Due: Beginning of 1999

The latest instalment in the *Duke Nukem* saga might just slip out this year, but we doubt it. Still, it should be worth the wait. Rammed full, as ever, of pleasingly Neanderthal humour, it will feature a number of fixed-path sequences, with Duke, for example, firing at helicopters

from a motorboat, or at pursuers from a speeding Harley. His weaponry will be upgradeable with things like sniperscopes, all the characters he meets will be properly lip-synched and have a repertoire of facial expressions, and all extraneous items carried by Duke and other characters will be proper objects, so that they can be passed from character to character (with the help of Duke's sunglasses-up display, Shades Operating System). Look out for Duke's evil yet sexy nemesis, Marsha.

SiN

Developer: Ritual
Publisher: Activision
Due: Any day now

The first of the *Quake II*-engineed shooters will probably look a touch dated by this time next year, but that shouldn't stop you from putting it on your shopping-list. Graphically, it's great, in gameplay terms it wipes the floor with *Quake II*, and it has a few innovations of its own, such as an extremely satisfying sniper-rifle. It makes extensive use of the QII engine's scripting language, introducing a very welcome element of strategic play, since its monsters will do things such as shoot bits of scenery which will kill you if you don't move quickly enough, and leads to some great Easter eggs, such as robots which can be persuaded to do the macarena.

And the rest...

In contrast to last year's E3, Ion Storm's *Daikatana* is now looking like a proper game, rather than a graphics-free technology demo, and bears the distinctive stamp of John Romero. Valve's *Half-Life* (another *Quake II*-engine effort) is also looking good and should ship soon, although there is a certain amount of speculation about Sierra's future. Meanwhile, over in Dallas, bizarre-sounding news that *Quake III* will be called *Quake Arena* and won't have any single-player component has been leaking out. Whatever happens, though, the next couple of years will be good for shooter fanatics.

Steve Boxer

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Gaming Trends for 1998/99

1998's E3 confirmed the suspicion that, over the last three years or so, the general quality of PC games has risen steadily and continues to do so. While it lacked any obvious game - for PC or, indeed, any platform - which conspicuously smashed genre boundaries and shunted the games world forward by a notch, there was, nevertheless, a large array of extremely high-quality new games on show. Among these, a number of trends were discernible.

The return of the sim

Poor old sim game fanatics have been going cold turkey recently, as none of the major publishers have created any new sims or God games for ages - the most recent one of any merit being EA's amusing *Dungeon Keeper*. But E3 demonstrated that the sim/God drought is about to end.

Thanks, it must be said, mainly to EA. The company showed *SimCity 3000*, which looks familiar enough but adds some welcome options such as the ability to design your own buildings, and is surely destined to shift a few copies. EA also showed *Dungeon Keeper 2*, which has a much more coherent plot - players must collect gems from each level to wreak their brand of filth on the outside world - more varied missions on each level and quicker combat.

God also returns

On the God/strategy game front, EA appeared to be trying to build up a monopoly. It showed *Alpha Centauri*, the latest effort from Sid Meier, who invented the genre. At first glance, *Alpha Centauri* may not seem very high-tech - its gameplay is turn-based and it bucks another trend demonstrated among the battle-strategy developers: the move to full 3D games. But Meier's expertise should ensure that *Alpha Centauri*'s game-play takes the genre to a new dimension. *Alpha Centauri*'s plot is bizarre: it starts off with a UN colonisation mission to the Earth's nearest star;



this mission hits a meteor shower and the resultant radiation causes rifts to open up between the crew, which organises itself along ideological lines. Thus, when you start building your *Alpha Centauri* community, you can take on various personae, such as the green, the economist, the scientist and so on. Very Utopian.

Bullfrog has been a jewel in EA's crown for some years and the company's *Populous: The Beginning* looked like one of the stars of the show. A sort of prequel to the two previous *Populous* games, it concerns what took place before you assumed the status of a God. You start off as a shaman, and must build up your tribe until it achieves total world domination, which in turn can be achieved by summoning the entire planet's inhabitants to take part in a massive and hilarious bundle.

Action-adventure with brains

Another noticeable trend at E3 was a movement among action-adventure games away from the boring old *Tomb Raider* style of moving from puzzle to puzzle,

saving your progress at every step. In fact, one such game on show which appeared to buck this trend was *Tomb Raider III*, which showed all the signs of being a TRII-style "Rush it out for Christmas" job. The addition of a couple more moves for Lara surely won't cut ice with the general public any more.

Eidos had an action-adventure effort which looks set to deliver everything that TRII won't, called *Omikron*. As well as looking brilliant, with superb use of perspective (and being the first game to contain a fully functional strip club), *Omikron* appears to have all the coherent plot and lack of linearity which *Tomb Raider* lacks.

Interplay's *Messiah* probably falls into the action-adventure category, although not comfortably, and it will certainly bring a new spin to gameplay, as it revolves around possessing hostile characters and making them inflict all sorts of torture on themselves once you've got what you want out of them. Activision's *Beneath* - a 3D action-adventure effort from point-and-click experts Presto Studios - also looks like a *Tomb Raider*-beater, both in terms of graphics and the need to think before you send your character leaping around.

PC gamers, it appears, are not going to be treated as though they are the unlucky recipients of frontal lobotomies for much longer.

Steve Boxer

IT'S WHEEL GOOD

Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel

Force Feedback technology in joysticks is a novel and largely useless oddity that prevents truly refined control. In a steering wheel, on the other hand, it was simply meant to be.

Microsoft, as is their way, have beaten all other peripheral makers to the punch with the world's first Force Feedback steering wheel. The motor generates a hefty 1.3 kilograms of force, which is adjustable, which is nice. Tested with Microsoft's *Monster Truck Madness 2* it was very, very cool. The feedback gave intuitive feedback that made driving more a matter of instinct, just as it ought to be.

Besides having wobbly bits, what impressed me most about the Sidewinder wheel was its overall design. This is one hell of a nice steering wheel - as good as, if not better than the Ferraro Advantage 1, which makes it just about the nicest steering wheel in town. The wheel is seriously big and chunky, it's got the all important gear levers behind the wheel; just as it ought to be, and the pedals look and feel tough and authentic.

Nice touch # 1 would have to be the quick release clamp mechanism. After years of fiddling around with Thrustmaster wheels that either refuse to stay put, or to do so require serious desk modification, this is a bit of good design that deserves attention.

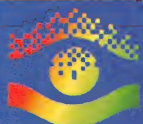
We should get this in the shops by Christmas, the price hasn't been confirmed yet.

Ben Mansill





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AGE OF EMPIRES II

Age of Empires hit the spot with its beautiful graphics and gameplay. There's a sequel on the way, naturally.

Category Real time strategy
Players 1-8
Publisher Microsoft/Ensemble
Available March 1999-ish

Big Bruce Shelley is back! Fast becoming the man who could do no wrong, he co-produced one of the greatest games of all time, *Civilisation* with Sid Meier, and then went on to create the best selling strategy title of last year (according to Microsoft, anyway) - *Age Of Empires*. 'When you're on to a good thing, stick to it' is the adage, and it's one that Ensemble studios and Microsoft are well aware of - work on *Age Of Empires II* is well underway, and it looks suitably impressive.

Polished and perfect

The feel of the original has been retained, the same isometric perspective has been used, and though the scope of the original has been toned down a little, we're still talking about a 1000-odd year timeline (450AD to 1450AD, roughly) for your little people to progress through. It's always nice when you see developers that take notice of their customers' wishes, and it seems that many fans of *AOE* will have their suggestions put into practice, both in terms of 'fixes' for problem areas and general



enhancements to gameplay. In fact, in a somewhat astounding announcement from Microsoft just a little while ago, the release date for *AOE 2* had been put back past the golden christmas period until March-ish of next year so that Ensemble could make sure that they had a top quality product ready for the masses. A strange announce-



Bigger building, bigger maps, and better features - AOE2 is looking like another top quality game



ment from a company that is holding on to the completely finished (as of June) *Motocross Madness* until Christmas so that they can make the most money out of it, but a welcome one nevertheless.

BIG maps

So what do you get from *AOE 2* then? Well, for starters the buildings and maps will be much larger this time. Ensemble are saying that on one of the largest maps it will take more than 8 minutes to walk from one side to the other, which should be plenty

large enough for huge campaigns, and especially for multi-player games. Apparently, there are quite a few people out there who are just as interested in the trading and diplomatic aspects as they are in the actual war - go figure. Anyway, with this in mind, *AOE 2* will enable a larger focus upon both diplomatic and trading aspects of the game as the user so desires, with a much more





(far left) The siege towers aren't going to be mobile this time. You'll have to place them in a bombardment position and leave them there



comprehensive set of player relations to set, including trade embargoes and the like.

People detail

Also, in a lovely display of political expediency, the sequel will feature female units to pla-

cate the large amount of requests for some gender balance. Well, at least sort of. Details are yet to be finalised, but it's unlikely that the...reproductive facets of your people will be a part of your expansionary policies. At present, it looks very likely that the females will just be another peasant unit, and won't be functioning in any special way. The units that you do produce, either male or female will (thankfully) be able to be queued, and each civilisation will have discrete and vaguely historically accurate

units. There will also be a much enhanced set of options for your units too, allowing you to set formations and enabling such orders as patrolling, guarding and following.

Siege wars

There are quite a few other little tweaks here and there that really make AOE 2 something to look forward to. For instance, most RTS games have guard towers of some sort - the buildings you place just outside or inside your territory. Up until now, you haven't been able to place units in them, but in AOE 2 you'll be able to pop your archer units inside the tower, garrisoning them and adding greatly to their offensive and defensive abilities. A very nice touch, as is the ability to create castles and serious walls to deter invaders. Castles can even have

gates that you can raise and lower as you see fit - including dropping the spiked gates on to invading parties as they run through. Lovely!

We loved the original AOE, and still do, and the improvements made seem to promise that the sequel will be even better. A full set of multiplayer options will be included, TCP/IP play will be available through Microsoft's IGZ as well as a direct connection, and LAN and modem play will be there too. Ensemble are promising to make the game much more stable under multiplay too, for those that have had the nightmare of AOE games dropping out just as you were about to launch the killer blow to your friends' civilisations. All up, even though March is a long way away, this is one that's going to be worth waiting for.



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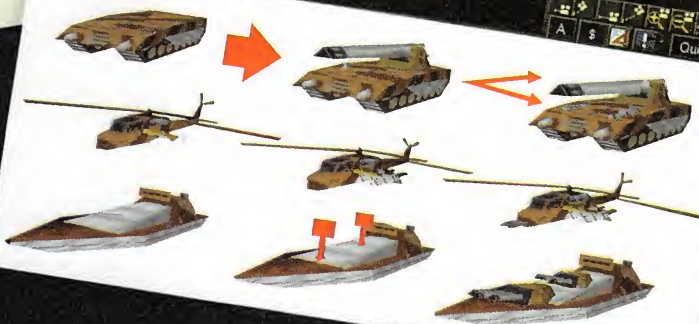
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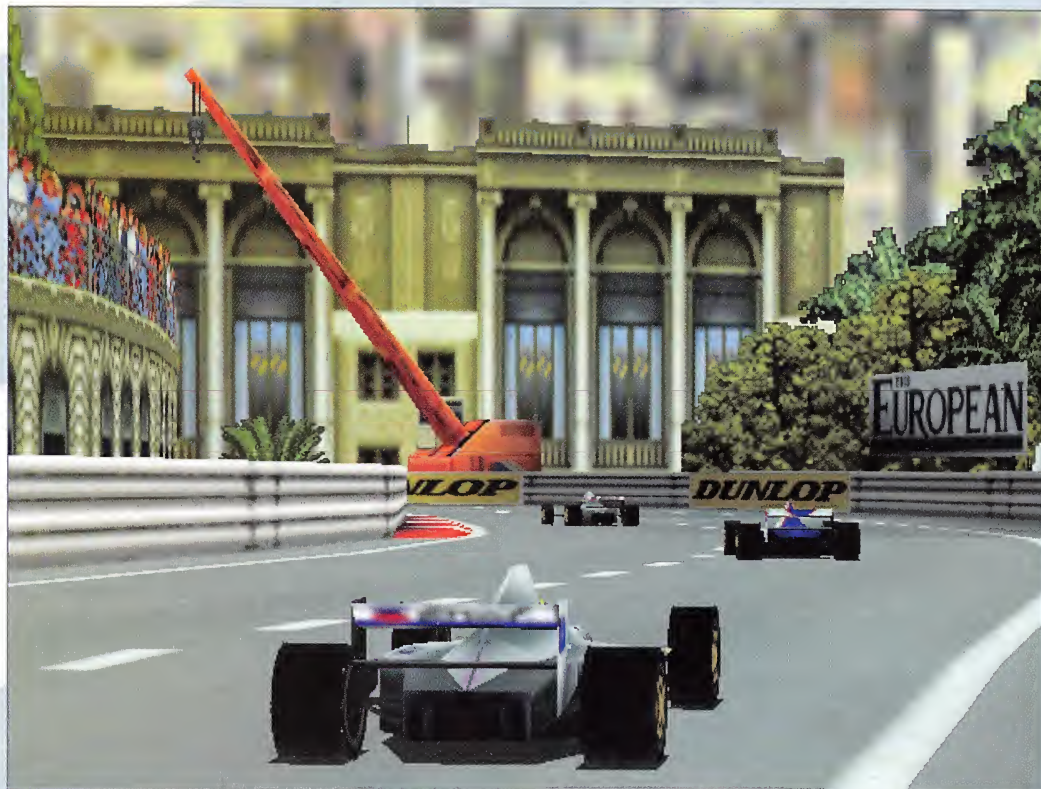
Johnny Herbert's Grand Prix Championships 1998

Category F1 Simulation
Players TBA
Publisher Midas
Available Soon

There are now more F1 racing sims out there than you can poke a stick at, but none have really been able to match GP2 in terms of playability, depth and realism. Some have come close, some have had much prettier graphics, but overall it's still GP2 that takes the chequered flag. Bearing the name tag of Murray Walker's favourite driver, and one of the nicest guys from the often ego-bloated ranks of F1 drivers, JHGP looks to be much more than just a pretty face.

The graphics are, as you would expect in this day and age, 3Dfx pretty, and the detail in the cars is impressive too. But it's the driving model that makes or breaks a game of this nature, and from what we've seen, JHGP should give GP2 a very strong challenge for the title of pre-eminent F1 sim. It's not endorsed by FIA though, so you won't be seeing all the real drivers (or simulacrum's thereof), it's just going to be Johnny in an authentic car against a host of unnamed drivers. But the details necessary for F1 sims will be there, like user customisable features such as damage, realism, and setup options for the car including brakes, tyres, fuel, gear ratios, steering and wings as well as the option to play a full championship, a single race, or just to practice any of the 15 authentic tracks.

We've only seen a relatively early beta so far, but the driving model feels absolutely spot-on, it's a real joy to drive, and the AI drivers behave like you would want them to (i.e. not Schumacker-ish). The final stamp of approval, though, comes from Benny 'Nigel' Mansill, PCPP's biggest F1 enthusiast; "it looks tops!" says Ben.



Here's Johnny!

PowerPlay's **Derek dela Fuente** spoke to The Man; Johnny Herbert on Computer games and F1 Racing

Do you own a computer or console and what game do you play? Tell us your thoughts on F1 racing games.

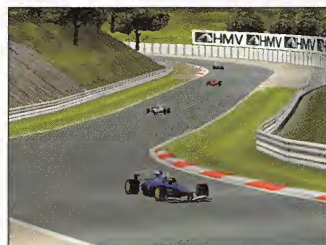
Yes I do own a computer. I do not own a lot of games though. In fact I only have a golf game and Grand Prix 2. My daughter has a console and sometimes I play Virtua Fighter with her. The best racing game was Grand Prix 2, but after 2 years there should be better games. Of course, with



The age-old quest for a perfect F1 cockpit is over. It's full (and fast) 3D, all 3 required wheels & it looks great while still providing a useable & authentic view



the new generation graphics, the new games look much better than Grand Prix 2 now. However I was disappointed with the graphics on Formula 1 97, because even for 3Dfx they are not really special. It looks like this game is a straight conversion from Playstation, it doesn't seem to utilise the 3Dfx graphic possibilities. Also the sound is very disappointing. If I look at Ubisoft's F1 racing simulation then the graphics are much better, however the handling is not very realistic.



What has been your input into Johnny Herbert's Racing?

I have tried to make the game as close as I can to what I think it is all about. I have tested the other new games and tried to

The handling is suitably frustrating, the graphics photographic & the opponent AI truly convincing. Yes PC racers, this could be the one

make this one more realistic. The reason I agreed to endorse this product was that although I was really impressed with the fantastic graphics I was given the opportunity to make sure the actual driving and handling of the cars was as realistic as possible. Although the graphics are very important it was the chance to influence the actual gameplay and handling that made my

mind up. Since I first saw the product, the actual handling has changed a lot. In fact, because I wanted to get the game as close to real driving as possible, the actual release date of the game has been delayed for 3 months. I am really pleased with the outcome and everyone in the team agrees with me that it was well worth the delay to make the necessary changes.



Fallout 2

Category RPG
Players 1
Publisher Interplay
Available October/November

It's unfortunate that to survive in today's marketplace game developers have to appeal more to a wider audience than ever before. Case in point is Ultima: Ascension (previously known as Ultima IX: Ascension). Dropping the isometric viewpoint and delving into Tomb Raider territory, UA bears little resemblance to its predecessors. Apparently there's not enough gamers out there to make a "traditional" RPG attractive enough for money hungry business er, game developers to produce.

Then why did Fallout do so well? Interplay's old-school gem was to many exactly what the doctor ordered - a traditional, sta-

Expect the box for Fallout 2 to have a big sticker saying "50% More!"



tistics-laden, role playing game. It was insanely popular amongst the RPG/Adventure gaming crowd, thanks to the blending of an established genre with a fresh setting and storyline. The biggest gripe with the game however, had to be its length. It was over a

little too soon for most gamers' liking.

With announcing the sequel to Fallout, Black Isle Productions (Interplay's role-playing division) have been quick to point out that the tentatively titled Fallout 2 will be at least 50% larger. 50% larger, and not just in game play area. While Fallout's emphasis was more on combat and item collection than the story, Black Isle are giving Fallout 2 much greater depth. Set eighty years after the events of Fallout, you as the descendant of the Vault Dweller must take on the prophecy and lead your tribe to the promised land, using the



Garden Of Eden Creation Kit. The storyline will be getting much more attention this time. With less of the "kill Mr X" style quests promised, Fallout 2's quests will also be more interesting in that they will be tied into the plot more than the straight out combat-based aspect of the first. Early in the game you must try to get through the Cave of Trials, filled with plenty of traps and pitfalls, in order to prove your worthiness. Most notably, Intelligence based skills will have a greater bearing on the game than combat related ones.

Fallout 2 will use the same engine as the first, though with sharper graphics and a supposedly quicker save game process. Also on the promised list are all those things expected in sequel - more items, more creatures, smarter AI (especially party member AI) and more skills. Due Late October. **MS**

Thunderboats

Category Arcade Racer
Players 1-8 (linked)
Publisher Perception
Available Arcade-Now, PC-'99

We don't usually like to compare PC games with those on other systems, but to appreciate just part of Thunderboats' appeal, a comparison will have to be made. Think WaveRace 64 on the Nintendo 64. The developers' command of accurate physics was perhaps WaveRace's strongest point. There's something about hooning about on the water's surface, at complete mercy to whatever conditions Mother Nature throws at you. Not only must you master the intricacies of standard racing (steering, etc), you have to learn to read and master patterns on the water's surface as well.

This comparison all serves well to indicate the standard of home-grown developers that Australia currently sports. Sydney based Perception have been hard

at it providing Australia and the world with our first taste of OAA gaming (see PCPP #26). And it looks good! So good in fact, that partners Perception and GMS (providing the hardware), have already taken stacks of pre-orders for Thunderboats units in arcades overseas.

Thunderboats is the power boat answer to racing on jet skis. Incorporating 3 race tracks (B&B, Jungle and Flooded City), players race against up to 5 other human racers or 20 AI racers in the quest to be first across the finish line. It's not just plain sailing all the way through though. With plenty of hidden routes to uncover, aggressive opposition to deal with, and the somewhat unpredictable nature of water to master, Thunderboats has been designed with a fun challenge in mind. The wake left behind a jet powered super boat is a sight to behold and makes that well timed overtake that much more



One of the first OAA games, Thunderboats is from an Australian developer

intense. To keep things varied there are also two styles of boat to race - jet and propeller based boats. Each will, naturally, handle in a different manner.

Visually stunning and damn fast, the great news is that when

it makes it way to the home PC market, the game will be enhanced rather than being commonly chopped down. Provided you have the hardware (which by all accounts is becoming the standard as we speak), Thunderboats will offer extra tracks, extra modes, and all the other trimmings expected of a home release. Don't wait for that though, play it in the arcades now! **MS**

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HEAVY GEAR 2

Mech'n its way to our PCs this summer is the sequel to Heavy Gear. It's the game the original should have been. Looks hot, gamers...

Category Mech Sim
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Activision
Available November

There's something special about strapping yourself into a 12 foot tall mechanised war machine, armed to the teeth with the latest high-tech weaponry and then wandering around a battlefield blowing the crap out of other similar vehicles. Well, there must be something special about the experience because of the continuing popularity of the 'paper based' games built around these scenarios, and the undoubtable success of Activision's (and now Microprose's) FASA based MechWarrior games. Activision remained undeterred after they lost the FASA license to Microprose, simply looking to a slightly different paper based game from 'Dream Pod 9' for inspiration, and thus Heavy Gear was born.

All-new 3D engine

It was a difficult birth though, and Heavy Gear never really took off as well as the development team at Activision had hoped. Once again, they remained undeterred and have pushed on with the sequel, the imaginatively named 'Heavy Gear 2'. Recently at E3 the Alpha version on display was causing quite a stir, and deservedly so, because rather than improve upon the now antiquated engine used with Heavy Gear, the sequel has been designed from scratch, including the game engine.

The engine, dubbed 'The Dark Side' by developers Jean-Marc Morel and Julio Jerez looked extremely impressive. It does require some form of 3D

accelerator card, which is going to leave some prospective users out in the cold. But there is support for around 30 accelerator cards already, and because of the open design of the game engine, adding support for new 3D cards later is not a difficult task. Basically, any card that can use Z-buffering will be compatible with 'The Dark Side', and even though there is no OpenGL support and no plans to implement support in the future, the level of detail in the terrain and the 'Gears' is a step above the previous Mech games.

Jump puddles

There will be a variety of new terrain types in the game, partly because rather

and the tactical changes that you will have to make to combat these effects and you're looking at a versatile and intriguing game.

Those flanking wingmen

But that's really only the start of it - and it just gets better. The AI in the original Heavy Gear wasn't terrible, but it wasn't all that impressive either. The AI in HG2 has had an extensive

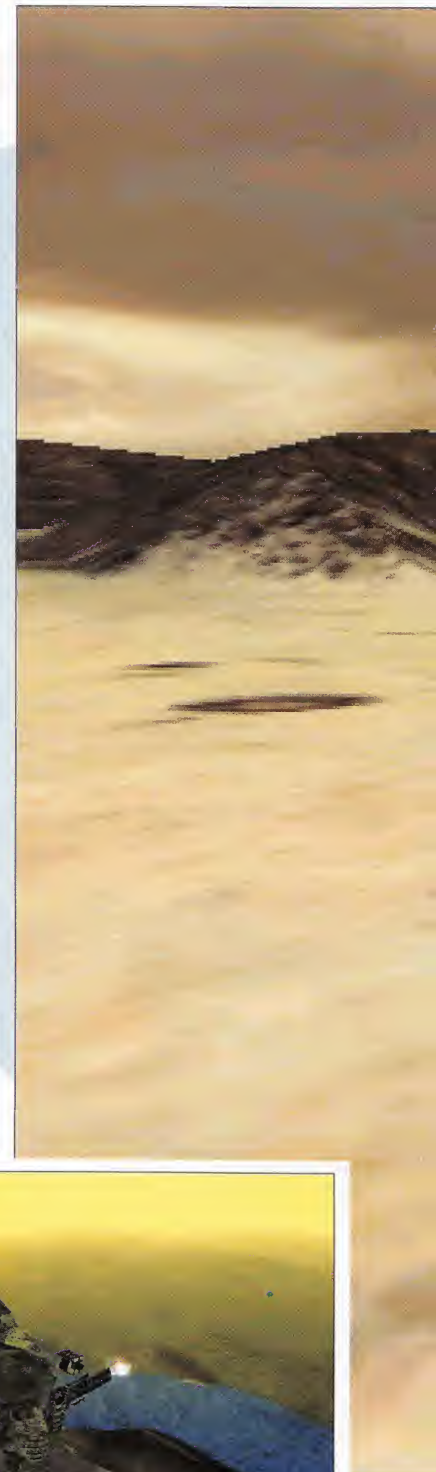


than just focus upon the world of Terra Nova, you will also be battling it out on the planet Caprice, replete with lakes, arctic areas, cities, swamps, volcanoes and lava filled gorges. The Gears will also be affected by the terrain in realistic ways, so walking through water will slow your Gear down, and jumping into the lava gorge is generally not a good idea. Along with this you will also be able to crouch and lie down in your Gear, including ducking down under water to hide from the enemy's sight. Top all of this off with weather that affects combat and the vision of your unit,



One of the many standout features in HG2: AI that acts like a Quake bot

revamp, so that now enemy AI units will be ducking for cover, hiding behind terrain, lying down so as to present the smallest target, and running for the hills when injuries occur. And what sounds best of all, is the AI units are supposed to now work together as a group, trying to outflank your troops, spring ambushes, and so on. To combat this though, you will now be able to





These pics don't really do justice to the detail and fluidity of movement displayed by the Gears - and these pics are from the Alpha version! Most impressive

issue more detailed commands to your wingmen, facilitating more squad like behaviour from your troops. Rather than just send your wingmen to attack a certain unit, you'll be able to send them on diversionary attacks to draw the enemy away from yourself, set up ambushes, dummy raids, and flanking manoeuvres. The multi-play system has also been extensively revamped (and this time there are no 'combat priorities') with Activision staffers estimating that the development time is split 50/50 between single play and multiplayer, which has to be a good thing for multiplayer fans.

Heavy Gear 2 is really one we're looking forward to; the

engine is powerful and versatile, the graphics are at least on a par with the other forthcoming Mech releases, and though there are indications that the gameplay might be a little more arcade style than MW3, the anime feel of the Heavy Gear universe and the professionalism behind the design of the game makes it one to definitely be excited about.



THE SCORE

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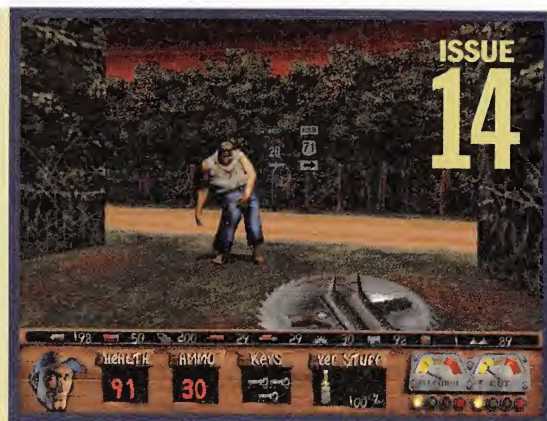
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FINAL FANTASY VII

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REVIEWS

Real Time Confusion

RTS stands for Real Time Strategy. An easy little TLA (Three Letter Acronym), but in most cases these days the 'S' for Strategy is a misnomer - 'A' for Action would be infinitely more appropriate in most cases. Losing precious units because you can't move your mouse cursor fast enough instantly destroys any hope of exercising considered strategy.

Well bless and behold, for MicroProse's Mech Commander is both Real-Time and Strategy. It takes a fresh look at the genre, but in new and different ways. Instead of being distracted by 'features' that don't actually help gameplay (3D units, seismic ripple effects and other such candy), Mech Commander takes a refreshingly lateral approach. The key is only having a couple to a few units to command. This means that you're not likely to lose any units behind a tree or in the corner of a huge map, that you're able to implement true tactical level strategies and, as a pleasant side effect, that you give much more of a damn about these little guys. Oh, and that they are cool mechs in a plausible post apocalyptic future too, champagne gaming!

Speaking of champagne gaming, and moving right along, is Heart of Darkness. This is one of those games that was supposed to be released 3 years ago, one for which we, and other game mags, roll out the annual preview when the publisher announces its imminent release, with it disappearing from the release schedule not long after. It's a 2D platform game, which is all the review really needs to say, but Hendry (under great duress) soldiers on and manages to say in 700 words that



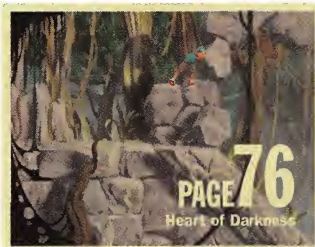
it's a 2D platformer. Good man, love your work.

Seeing as I'm feeling like a cynical bastard, commenting on the X-Files game is something that needs to be done here and now. Fans of the TV show will love it unconditionally and hardcore gamers will have a reasonable experience, but games that rely on the strength of a license are becoming a little dull. Sure, make it the X-Files - the potential is fantastic, but please, don't just settle for good enough, let's see a license-based game that really shines. Blade Runner and not much else springs to mind as the exception.

There's a ton of great games reviewed this issue, but take the time to check out Final Fantasy VII. We temporarily put aside our derision of all things Playstation (PC PowerPlay manifesto, article 34, subsection 22A) to bow before the greatness of this game. The Japanese RPG style is quite different to western RPGs; character development is much stronger, while irrelevant sub-plots are plentiful. The whole playing experience is epic in the truest sense of the word. Final Fantasy VII is one of those games you'll be driven to finish. Magnetic and truly brilliant.

Ben Mansill
Editor

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THE PC POWERPLAY SCORING SYSTEM

95%+	PLATINUM The Best. Virtually faultless, reserved for games which cause loss of sleep from thinking of nothing else.
90-94%	GOLD A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.
80-90%	A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 month's time.
60-80%	Competent and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.
40-60%	Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift
0-40%	Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible

MECH COMMANDER

All new RTS gaming, big mechs and the third best intro ever. MicroProse do the FASA Mechwarrior name the justice it deserves.

I've always thought that mechs were hugely impractical bits of transport machinery. Well, sure, they're probably great for getting a parking spot at your local Westfield or beating the peak hour traffic jams out of the city, but for the business of war? I don't think so. Too big and too slow to be a truly effective fighting force, the mech is a cool idea destined to forever remain a figment of our imaginations. Several well-aimed shots to its legs and it's crippled and useless. About the only thing going in the mech's favour is its astonishingly brutal arsenal of stonking great missiles and lasers and cannons and other bloody big guns. Because, let's face it, they need them.



Inexplicable sexiness

But - hey! - what a cool idea? Whatever its practicalities, there's something undeniably appealing, a certain inexplicable sexiness, about stomping around futuristic cities in an oversized Mattel toy crushing buildings and people as you go. Which, rather conveniently, is precisely what Mech Commander is all about, too.

Fanatics will be pleased to discover that Mech Commander has been developed as an official BattleTech licensed game. Of course, this means that many of the rules and minutiae of the original BT board game will have been implemented here. But obviously, many of them won't either, due to the differences over what makes a good board game as opposed to a good computer game. Someone more

knowledgeable than I about such matters has informed me that, for example, heat management of each mech would be unfeasible for a

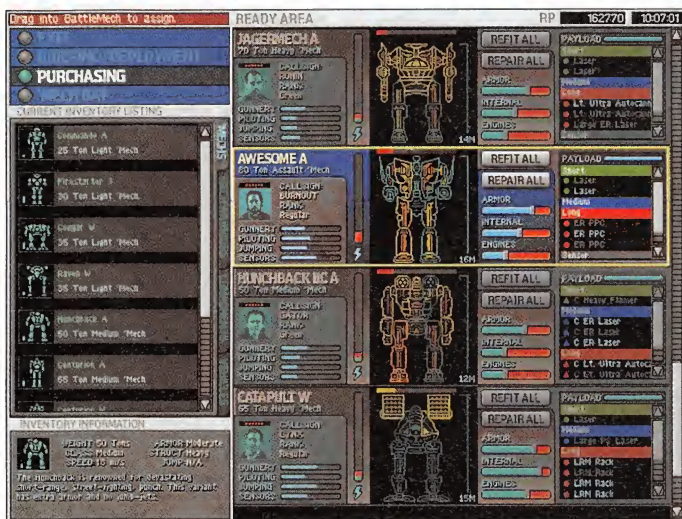
computerised version and, thus, has been omitted in this translation. Someone else told me they have now all been fitted with climate control instead, but I'm inclined not to believe him.

Tactical flexibility

Briefly, Mech Commander is an isometric, squad-level, real-time strategy game. Emphasising pure combat at the expense of dull resource mining, Mech Commander pins its hopes on providing appreciably more tactical flexibility than most other RTS titles can offer. At heart then, it remains firmly entrenched within the real-time camp,



Only feel safe with 50 tanks? Try winning a war with just 4 mechs and a limited number of pilots



but offers sufficient genuine tactics to deservedly warrant the real-time STRATEGY tag.

I should mention that every time you start a mission, your squad is deployed onto the surface of Port Arthur, the uncom-



fortably-named planet around which your operations base is in orbit. It is upon Port Arthur - formerly under your control - that the technologically advanced Smoke Jaguar Clan have begun their invasion, and it is your task to reclaim it. Easing you into the game, the first few missions only allow you to land a small group of three or four mechs, but as the war progresses you will need to take control of up to a dozen. Further, these twelve can be split into a maximum of four groups, each with their own designated

force leader whose actions they will follow with some degree of intelligence.

Sir Vival

So, what are these genuine tactics? For a start, you begin each mission with only a limited number of mechs at your disposal. In the briefing and setup screens you can assign up to twelve mechs for the current mission, depending upon how much weight your dropships are allowed to carry onto the planet. The difference with more run-of-the-mill RTS games should be obvious. Instead of churning out endless hordes of faceless tanks (or whatever), in Mech Commander you have to harness the mechs you've been given and make do with them and only them, utilising the skills you have and stressing survival at all costs.

Everything persists throughout the game as well. From the mechs themselves to the mechwarrior who pilot them, from the weapons

"Mech mine a double!" The urban landscapes make up for the questionable plausibility of it all



you kit them out with to the damage they sustain during combat, everything carries over from one mission to the next. Pilots increase their proficiency (in the four skills of gunnery, piloting, jumping and sensors) as they gain combat experience and may even do well enough to achieve a promotion. You've got to hang on to these little guys, although to do so may mean resting a veteran pilot for a mission or two if he gets injured. Between missions it's time to repair any damaged mechs, buy and sell weapons, and peruse the list of items you might

Mech Games: A Brief History

Almost without anyone realising, Mech games have moved from the sole domain of a coterie of hard-core boardgaming freaks only a few years ago to the bestselling mainstream gaming concern it is today. And the blame (or thanks, I should say) can be laid squarely at the feet of one game, Activision's Mechwarrior series. Mechwarrior 2, in particular, proved a raging success with its exo-skeletal take on the first-person action (with a dash of strategy) genre. The awesome intro cinematics didn't do it any harm either. Activision subsequently lost the BattleTech license to a rival company, but still managed to spawn the cool Mechwarrior Mercenaries before keeling over like an incest that dies after childbirth. Mech Commander is the first product of the intimate couplings brought about by BattleTech's latest fling with Microprose.



Enemy vehicles can be subdued and captured, sometimes revealing important info about the surrounding terrain or the mission itself. By capturing a control centre you can even take control of enemy laser turrets, turning them onto your surprised foe. Artillery strikes are available for those crucial moments - destroying a bridge to cut off your pursuers, perhaps - and several useful non-mech vehicles (scout cars, minelayers, etc) can be called upon to lend further assistance.

Nice visual touches abound throughout the game. Watch your mechs closely, especially on the zoomed-in view, and you'll see them uprooting trees as they trek across the countryside, crushing flimsy fences under their hefty feet, and leaving enormous craters in the ground. Explosives seem to

A number of other developers have tried their hand at producing unofficial mech-styled games with mostly positive results. Sierra can boast of the eerily MW2-ish Earth Siege and the turn-based tactics of Cyberstorm (although its sequel left a lot to be desired). The sadly-underestimated and underbought (if that's a word) Terra Nova was also similarly robotically-influenced, while Rise Of The Robots was just a pile of unsalvageable detritus unfit to polish the chrome of any of the above games. Finally, I have a feeling there was a BattleTech strategy game of some forgettable description made for the Amiga back in about 1990 or something, but I can't remember a thing about it. If any reader can recall what it was called, please don't hesitate to keep it to yourself.



have salvaged in the previous foray. Salvaging some useful equipment from the enemy or capturing a resource depot speeds up the arrival of new technology and gives you a distinct advantage for the future.

Absolute control

Once you're on the battlefield itself, combat is defiantly different to the rest of the real-time brigade. Mechs can be individually ordered to mount short, medium and long range attacks, or simply attack from their present position. Against a moving enemy they will then use their initiative and attempt to maintain the range you've selected. You can also target specific sections of an enemy mech in an effort to disable their weapons or - yes! - shoot their legs off and leave them easy targets.

be context sensitive as well - destroyed fuel tanks will fireball into the air, while mechs will spark and smoke as they collapse.

No mid-game save!

The animation of each mech is truly superb, although you only appreciate it close up. This is one minor drawback. The game is most playable at the distant view, yet it can look a little dull and small at times. Zoom in and you get the full graphical glory, but sacrifice some gameplay convenience. A slightly more serious problem is the absence of any sort of single-player skirmish mode, but the ease



of the multi-player games should compensate. Unfortunately, I've saved the most glaring flaw until last. The absence of a mid-mission save option is a crime and alone is enough to deny Mech Commander a 90% rating. I'm sure I don't need to tell you how frustrating it is to die near the end of a mission, then have to replay the whole thing again. You have been warned.

As fortune would have it, however, Mech Commander is more than good enough to recover from such a flaw. Microprose have to be congratulated once for trying something a little different and twice for making it work. This is a real-time strategy game with genuine strategy. Tactical doesn't have to mean turn-based any more.

David Wildgoose



The council won't be pleased, not at all... Damage to mechs is represented realistically, one-legged mechs still look as silly as they always did

PLUS+

BATTLETECH

Visit the BattleTech site at www.fasa.com/BattleTech, or the official Mech Comm site at www.mechcommander.com.

86%

Category Real-time strategy
Players 1 (2-6 Multi-play)
Publisher Microprose
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Mechs are still exceptionally fantastic things. Thoughtful real-time strategy with some inspired tactical design. Coherent and persistent mission structure works a treat.

Against No mid-mission saves. That's the only real fault, but it's a significant one.

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Want P166, 32Mb RAM, 8xCD

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www.activision.com

THE X FILES GAME

It's yet another 'interactive movie' affair - but the attention to detail and professional design and direction make this one for the X-Phile's to be very excited about

Government conspiracies, paranormal phenomena and shady characters are all trademarks of the highly successful X Files television series. The X Files Game is the latest offering from Fox Interactive and is sure to please even the most jaded gamer.

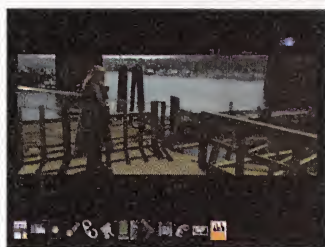
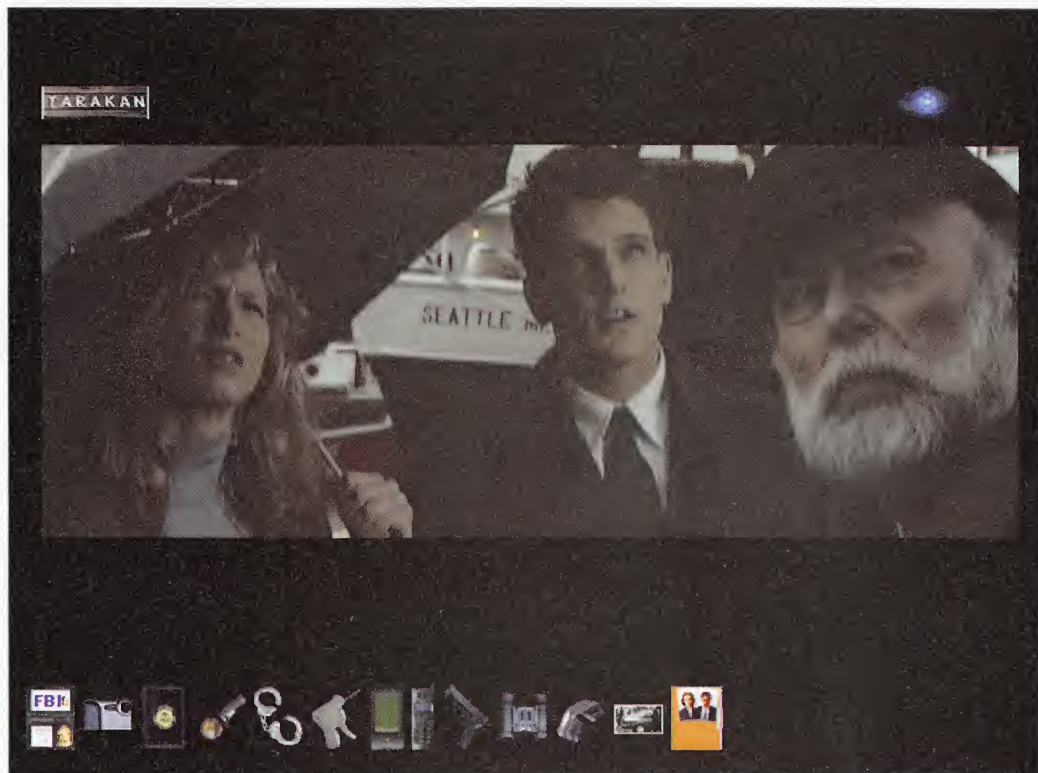
Set in the city of Seattle, the story begins with the mysterious disappearance of agent Mulder and his partner; the delectable agent Scully. After they fail to report in for three days, Assistant Director Skinner becomes concerned for their safety and flies to Seattle. In an effort to locate the wayward agents, he enlists the aid of personnel from the local bureau.

Civil War enthusiasm

You, the player, will assume the role of Craig Willmore; a young but extremely dedicated field agent who's something of a Civil War enthusiast, and a budding writer in his spare time. A flawless track record and a swag of commendations have earned him a reputation among his colleagues and superiors as someone who can get the job done.

Skinner makes it blatantly apparent that he wants Scully and Mulder found ASAP. Seeing it as an opportunity to impress the higher-ups, Willmore confidently accepts the challenge and sets out to begin where the missing agents left off.

As in most point-and-click adventures, movement throughout and interaction with the game world is accomplished through the use of a mouse. The mouse cursor morphs into a number of pointers when moved over an area where an action can be per-



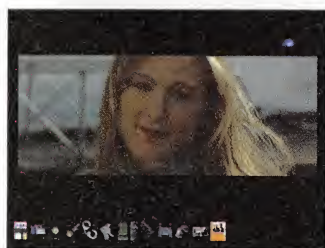
It was inevitable. Thank someone that the game of the series is actually decent. One warning though: this game requires a fast system and plenty of hard disk space



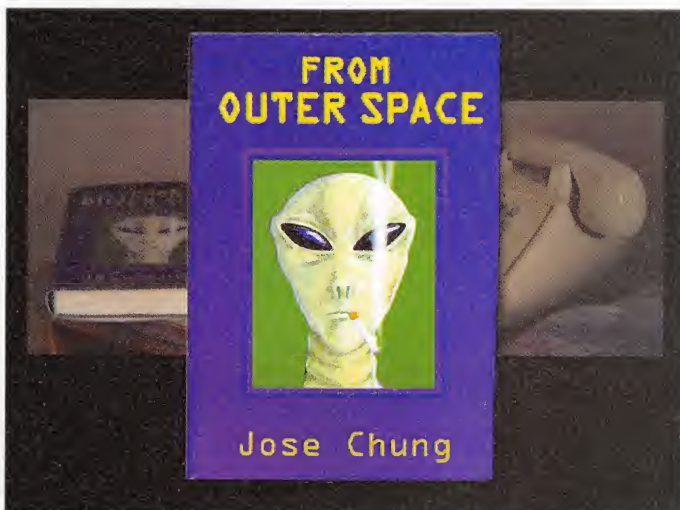
formed. Such pointers include a pointing finger to move in a certain direction or an eyeball to closely examine an object. Verbal

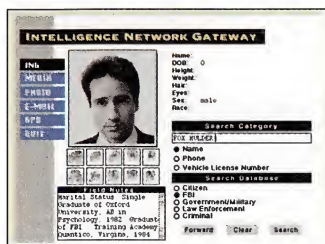
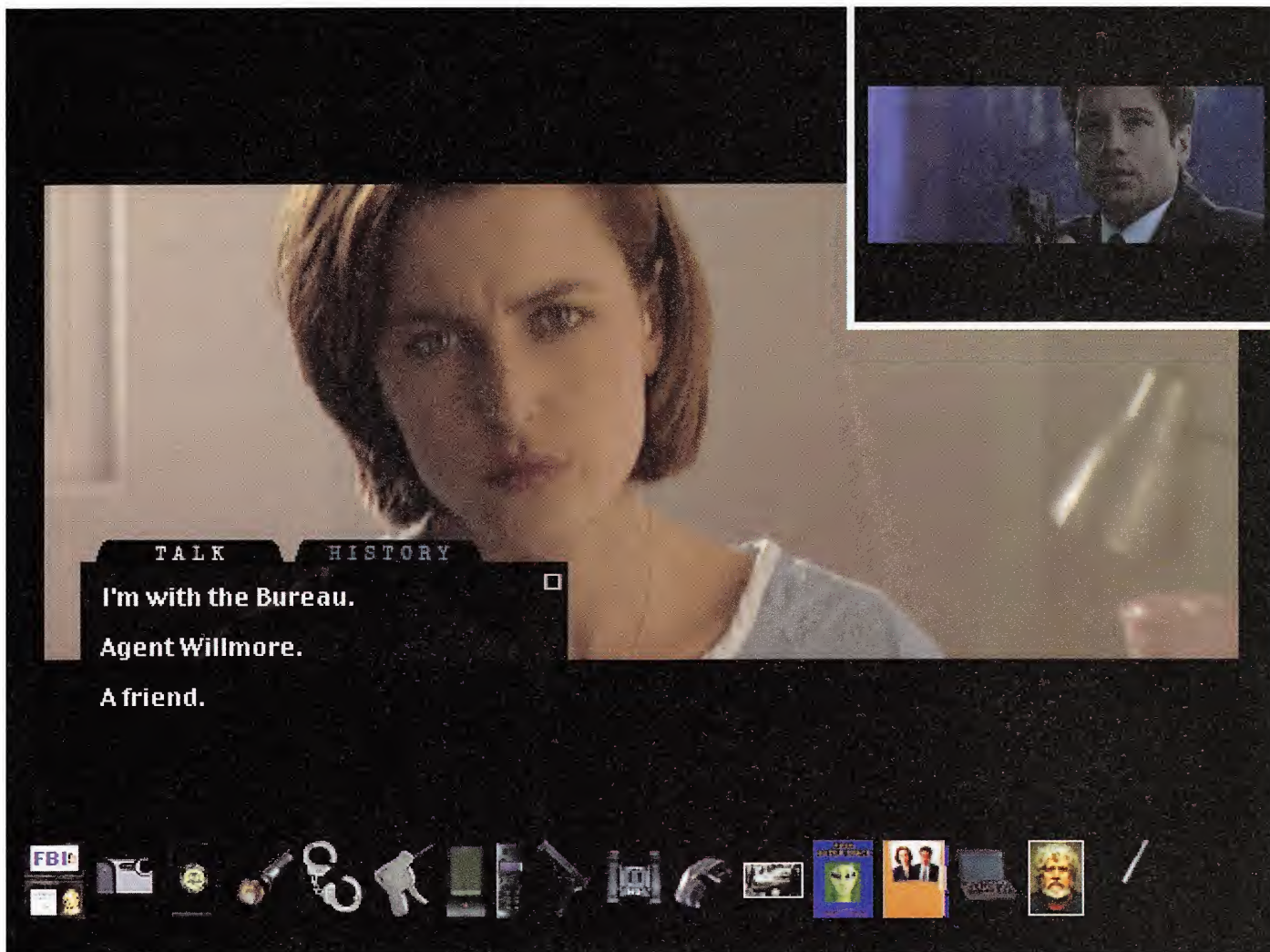
communication with other characters is facilitated through the use of the mouth pointer and objects can be manipulated using the gripping hand pointer. This simple and very intuitive interface is extremely effective and reduces the learning curve of the game significantly.

The game itself is played from a first-person perspective in a letterbox format. Displayed below the viewing window are the various inventory items carried by your character. These include standard FBI equipment like your gun, identification badge, handcuffs and evidence kit. Other items include night vision goggles, a digital camera and the supremely cool lock pick seen in many episodes.



68 PC PowerPlay





Apple Newton product placement

To keep in touch with a multitude of contacts, you also have a government-issued mobile phone and a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant). I was rather amused to find that the PDA is an Apple Newton; a gadget notorious for its somewhat dubious quality. Fortunately, the Newton used in the game is more reliable than its real life counterpart! As well as

being a kind of virtual notepad, the PDA has email capabilities and is the means by which your character travels to different locations within the game. On paper, this may be a confusing concept but, in reality, it's quite simple. The PDA displays a map similar to a

street directory and clicking on a location will take you there automatically. This system efficiently eliminates what would be an unnecessary and tiresome chore of driving or (god forbid) walking to each and every location.

In the course of investigating the disappearance of Scully and Mulder, there are a number of puzzles to be solved. The majority are relatively straightforward but one puzzle is completely illogical and absolutely infuriating. It involves gaining access to your character's computer by figuring out his password. How a person can be an agent in the FBI but forget his own password is beyond me! Aside from this minor setback, the investigative side of the game is a lot of fun

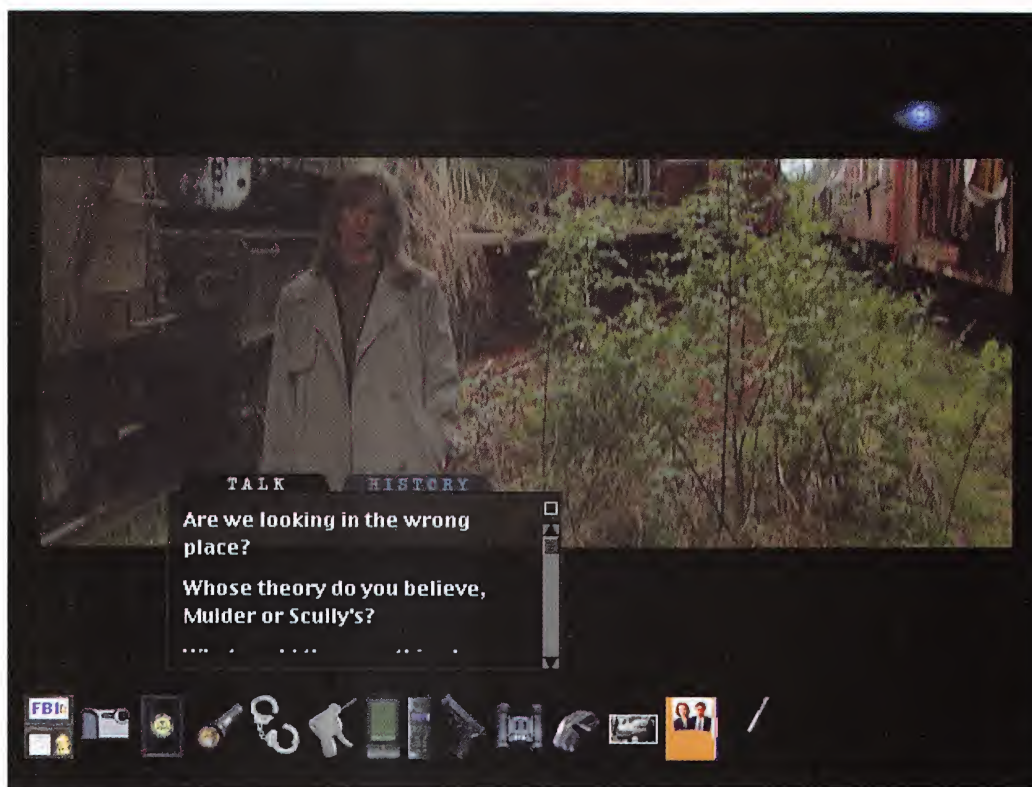
and will really appeal to those of you who can't get enough of puzzles that involve logical thinking.

Authentic X-Files

As would be expected, the quality of acting and camera work in the game is unsurpassed. This is due in no small part to the fact that regular cast members star in the game. Suspense is maintained throughout and the appearance of characters like Mr X, the Lone Gunmen and the Cancer Man are thrilling to say the least.

Free with game! Scully's Greatest Pensive Expressions. Curious, concerned, a little scared, a lot scared, and positive she'll sort it out in the end





Scully realises for the 372nd time that there may be something out there, and calls Mulder on his mobile to tell him so

simple case of agents gone bye-bye evolves into an intricate storyline that X Files fans and conspiracy theorists will love.

The X Files has attained cult status worldwide and the fact that each and every episode is like a mini movie has been an important determinant of its burgeoning popularity. The thoroughly immersive atmosphere, with everything from the creepy lighting to the dramatic background music, has been replicated perfectly. For fans of the television series, this is a major plus.

Authentic X-Files

Much of this game's appeal lies in discovering many of the "easter eggs" contained within the game. Almost every scene is liberally scattered with items

that have been alluded to by the show's characters or used as props in X Files episodes. These items account for much of the humorous subject matter in the game and are a fantastic way to reward diligent players and devoted fans. They also succeed in enhancing the game's fun factor and extending its longevity. Notice boards are a particularly good source of entertainment with surveys like "The Roswell Autopsy: Is it Real?" complete with voting form. Others advocate theories like the alleged theft of John F Kennedy's brain! Many items found within the game are also references to the character traits of Mulder and Scully. Examples include an open bible in Scully's motel room and a pile of Pistachio nut shells scattered on Mulder's bedside table.

Realism also extends beyond the usual consequences of behaviour towards other characters. I once used the mobile phone to make a personal call and thought nothing of it.

However, I later received an email from the FBI's accounting department saying that the cost of the call would be deducted from my next pay cheque! This sort of thing never ceases to amaze and is yet another example of how immersive the game can be.

Not much replay value

Like all games in this genre, The X Files Game has to contend with the fact that, by their very nature, point-and-click adventures have fairly limited replay value. Because most are linear or, in this case semi-linear, there's little incentive to replay them once they're completed. Despite being crammed onto seven(!) CD's, the game only takes about ten hours to complete. Unfortunately, X Files also requires a high-end PC to run it adequately. Anything less than a P200 and you won't be able to get maximum enjoyment out of it. To make matters worse, the full install requires over three Gigabytes of disk space! These two factors make careful consideration of whether to buy the game or not essential.

It all comes down to whether you're willing to pay \$90 for what is basically a game which you'll only play once. For die-hard fans, the X Files Game is an essential purchase. For others, it may be wiser to save your money.

Brett Robinson

76%

Category Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Fox Interactive
Price \$89.95
Rating M
Available Now

For A thoroughly immersive game world with all the atmosphere and charm of the television show.

Against Limited replay value. More system-dependent than Unreal!

Need P120, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD, 250MB HD space

Want P200+, 32Mb RAM, 8x CD, 330MB HD space

PLUS+

www.thex-files.com
The official X Files site.
Loaded with interesting info like episode summaries and a fan discussion board.



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in single
player mode you
haven't really
played it at all!



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DESCENT: Freespace

Wing Commander meets X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter meets game designers who know what it takes to make a classic.

Don't be fooled by the title, for this is a Descent game in name only. The key is in the subtitle - Freespace.

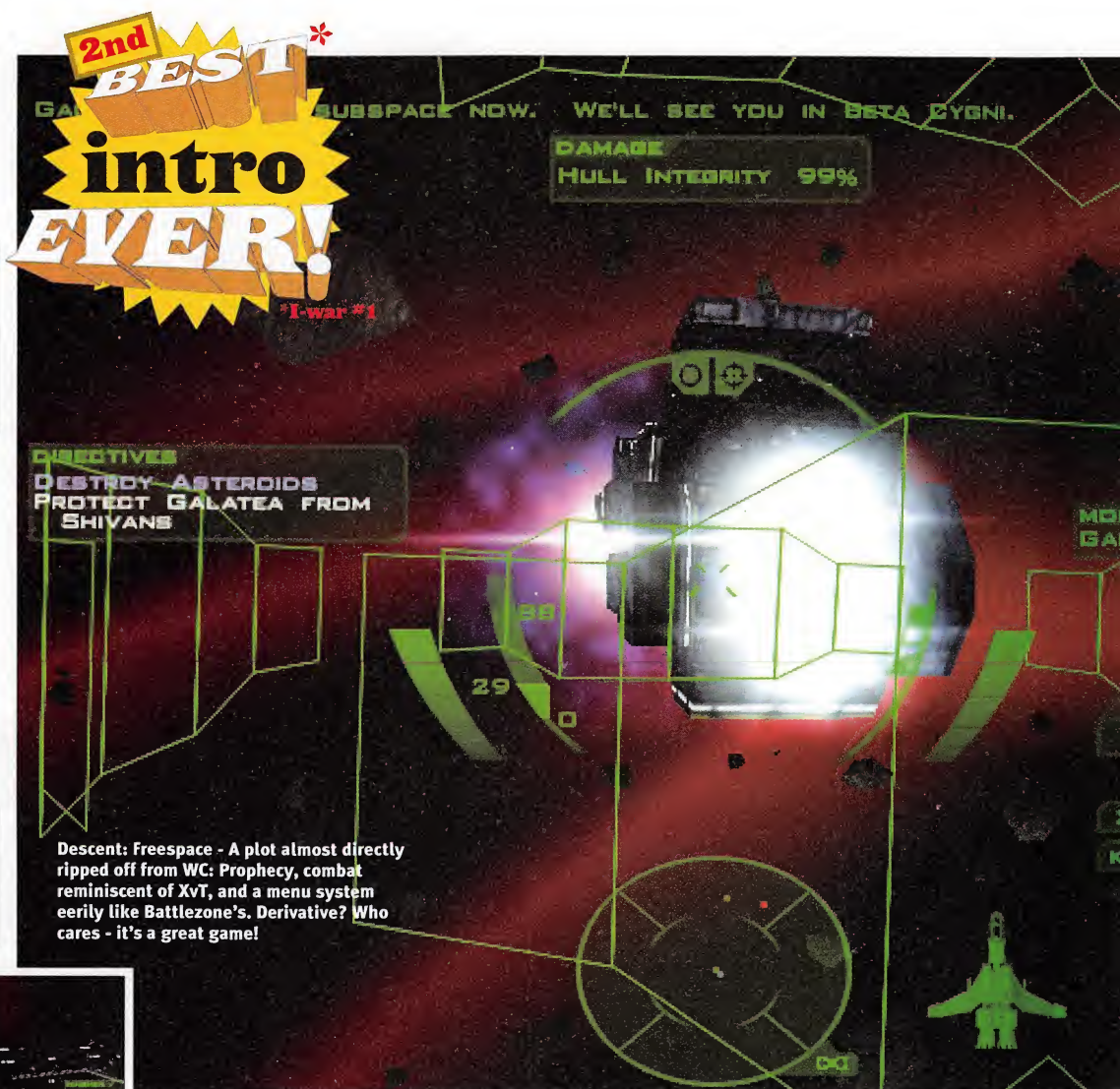
Rather than navigating the cramped, claustrophobic corridors of Descent 1 & 2, Freespace, as the name implies, thrusts you into the vast, limitless freedom of outer space, unhindered by such troublesome things as doors, walls and keycards. Bearing all the hallmarks of the classic space combat sim, as opposed to 3D shooter, this is very much in the tradition of Tie-Fighter and Wing Commander.

Descent?

There's a danger, I guess, that in using the Descent name, but producing a radically different game, Interplay may well alienate



a significant section of their potential market. Descent fans could easily be turned off by the switch of gaming style, while those who didn't like Descent (particularly those who enjoy space combat sims) may well dismiss Freespace without giving it a chance. Well, I can reassure the latter with one simple instruction - don't worry about the Descent link, it's irrelevant. And as for the former, I can only argue from



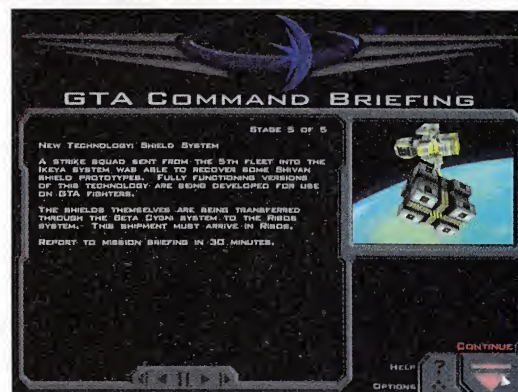
Descent: Freespace - A plot almost directly ripped off from WC: Prophecy, combat reminiscent of XvT, and a menu system eerily like Battlezone's. Derivative? Who cares - it's a great game!

personal experience that I loved Descent - and now I love Freespace. Forget the genre, just feel the quality. This is a brilliant game.

Only you can save Earth...

War had been raging between the Galactic Terran Alliance and the alien Vasudan race for some time before you signed up as a rookie GTA pilot. Your career begins slowly with several training missions teaching you the basics of flight and combat. Soon, however, you find yourself in the heat of battle against the Vasudans, whether it's dogfighting their ships or capturing

human traitors. Within half a dozen or so missions, though, comes a plot twist that turns around the entire war. A new alien race, the Shivans, arrives, boasting almost-undetectable ships and immensely powerful weapons, and launches attacking raids on both the GTA and Vasudan forces. Putting aside their differences in the face of a common enemy, the two sides form an



alliance to defeat the Shivans. It's a great plot, but unfortunately it hasn't been exploited as fully as it could have been. One of my few criticisms of the game is that, unlike its obvious rivals,



Freespace lacks something in terms of atmosphere. In the Kiltrathi, Wing Commander has a memorable enemy full of character, while all the Lucasarts games have the familiar Star Wars universe to plunder. Freespace, having neither, nor enough spectacular cut-scenes or plot advances to create its own, suffers in comparison.

Against that, the mission structure and the missions themselves, are superb and full of innovation. I love the way the training is seamlessly integrated into the campaign. Three basic training missions kick it off, though you'll return at later stages for some advanced training when new technology becomes

available. You'll need to pay close attention during them as well, for the controls can seem horrendously complicated at first. Before long, however, you'll be piloting like a pro and expressing appreciation at the comprehensiveness of the commands at your disposal. As in any space sim, a decent joystick is best for control of your own ship, while all manner of keys need to be utilised for thruster levels, afterburners, countermeasure missiles, shield and energy management, and targeting other ships.

More than any previous game, Freespace hands you total control over your wingmen. From a simple Battlezone-style command menu, you can order attacks, for-

mations, repairs, even reinforcements, to any single ship or small squadron. The tactical options extend to allowing you (and your wingmen) to target specific subsystems aboard enemy ships, such as their weapons, communications or engines. And it's there with a simple press of a key. Genius.

Dynamic mission pathing

Gratifyingly, the gameplay regularly breaks from the mould of space combat tradition. Not only do the intelligent wingmen offer greater flexibility than ever before, but the missions consistently throw up new challenges. On one you'll be weaving through an asteroid belt, escorting a giant capital ship to its waypoint (in this case, a hyperspace point) and having to slam missiles into any rocks getting too close. On the next you might be ambushed by some renegade Vasudans sympathetic to the Shivans. Cleverly, there's dynamic pathing throughout each mission, meaning failure or success in one objective will undoubtedly have (potentially dire) repercussions when you attempt later ones.



Whereas XvT promotes multiplayer over singleplay, Descent: Freespace does the opposite

100% quality

Placing Freespace in the space combat sim hierarchy failed to prove the difficult task I had anticipated it to be. Granted, it does wear its influences not only on its sleeve, but emblazoned defiantly across the rest of its smartly-tailored uniform as well. For this, some will argue that it is merely a clone, and thus undeserving of acclaim equal to that given to, say, X-Wing vs Tie-Fighter. But, I disagree. Developers Volition have executed the whole game with such scintillating flair and inexhaustible precision that its similarity to certain other games just isn't an issue. Freespace is XW vs TF with a genuinely triumphant single-player campaign (and, admittedly, also with a less-than-perfect multi-player experience, at this stage). It is Wing Commander without Mark Hamill. And that's fantastic.

David Wildgoose



PLUS+



<http://www.volition-inc.com/html/games/games.html> for patches, multi-player info and gain entrance to the Freespace web ring.

93%

Category Space Combat
Players 1-Multi
Publisher Interplay
Price \$89.95
Rating G
Available Now

For Thrillingly-designed solo campaign. Some terrific graphics, especially the awesomely large capital ships. Mission editor should provide plenty of long-term value, as will the extensive multi-player options (co-op and team play available out of the box, straight dog-fighting to come) so long as the bugs can be fixed.

Against Those few multi-player problems, but Volition are patching it as I write. Possibly lacks a little in atmosphere, but that's all.

Need P133, 32Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P200, 3Dfx, Force Feedback joystick

3D SUPPORT
Glide & D3D

SENTINEL RETURNS

A universal favourite on the C64, Sentinel returns - in style.

If you grew up in the age of the 8-bit wonders you might fondly remember The Sentinel. Appearing across a number of the classic consoles, it was perhaps the first virtual reality game ever invented. It was immensely addictive and came with 1000 levels, not bad for a trusty Spectrum 48k or C64.

Got the feel

Of course, when age old classics make the change to the power beast platforms of today, you always end up losing some aspect of the original gameplay. Or do you? Just call me a Spice Girl and paint chocolate sauce over me if Sentinel Returns doesn't recreate the original gameplay to the letter. The same letterbox viewing area, the same



sparse interface, the same basic warning scanner. The only difference between the console classic and the PC version is the transition to a glorious hardware accelerated 3D environment.

And you know what this means don't you? A vast number of months are about to become a 'blank spot' in my memory (and you thought aliens were the cause of this).

Fast'n'scary

Think you need first-person Unreal to give you adrenalin? My friend, you have not stood where the Sentinel stands. And that, as it happens, is the aim of the game. Each level is a squarish landscape filled with peaks and troughs and populated by trees (of a sort). The Sentinel always stands on the highest peak, allowing it to see the entire landscape. The player, generally, starts at the lowest point on the map.

Trees can be absorbed for



An updated version of an absolute classic from the days of yore that survives the test of time. The graphics are updated, but the gameplay didn't need messing with



energy and energy can be used to create objects such as boulders and robot shells. Boulders can be used to create building blocks on top of which you can then create a robot, assuming you can see the

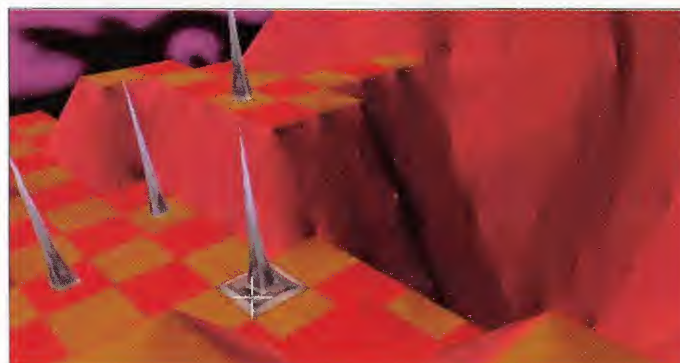
top side square. Moving around is then just a matter of warping your presence from one robot shell to another, allowing you to absorb the shell you just left.

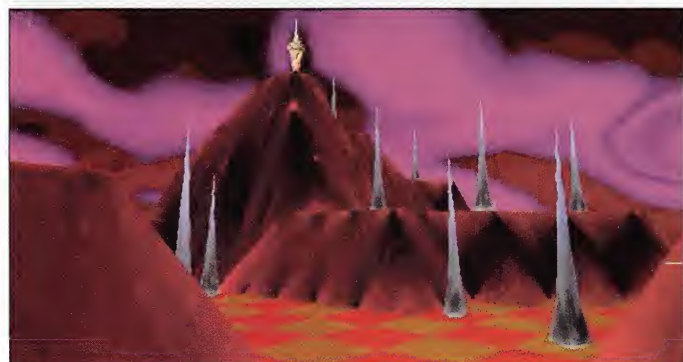
Sound weird? It is at first, but think of it this way — there are no moving parts. Like a chess game you place your pieces, except that you're on the board and you are the pieces.

Like you, the Sentinel can also absorb objects but unlike you, the Sentinel has the scope to see and thus absorb anything on the landscape — this means you. Slowly rotating on its pedestal, the Sentinel will lock onto and absorb you or any of your creations, and then re-distribute that energy back into the landscape as trees. Each world has a set level of energy, and the more energy you have stored when you finally reach the Sentinel, the further you can jump levels. Of course, spending time trying to gather more energy before you complete the map leaves you more open to dying by the Sentinel's gaze.

Intellectual combat

The addictive gameplay lies in your ability to navigate and climb the environment around you, absorbing energy and creat-





ing the means to get higher and higher, all whilst avoiding the Sentinel's gaze. When you get high enough to see the Sentinel's pedestal, you can absorb it and hyperspace to a later level. Think about trying to plan your next

move when suddenly your radar goes mental and you see your energy getting sucked out — you have to create a robot and warp out immediately, but if you go down you lose the time you've spent getting up. Spend too long trying to find a better vantage point and it's game over. Hence, most of the time, you have to keep an eye on the Sentinel and try and 'jump' its gaze by creating robots on the other side of the landscape where its gaze has just passed. This gets the adrenalin pumping. It's like playing Doom with the lights off.

Later levels introduce harder landscapes, less world energy and sentries — smaller less powerful Sentinels — and suddenly you're dodging more than one gaze. Then it gets really fun (in a sadistic kind of way).

A more than visible alternative to the plethora of shoot-em-ups out there. This game really makes you think!

Multiplayer too!

Now this sounds odd. Multiplayer Sentinel you say? How? Well... just throw in more players. Think about it — each player competing to get to the Sentinel first, and let's not forget that you can absorb objects in your environment. I see competitive spirits rising to the occasion, and friendships quickly broken. Just what you expect from a classic.

Don't be mistaken, though, as Sentinel Returns isn't everyone's cup of soup. It's a thinking gamer's game, and if the concept is new to you then you're likely to find it hard to get into.

If you loved the original, however, you'll love Sentinel Returns. The 3D support and excellent atmospheric music will have you enthralled.

Still, it's not what it could have been. Sentinel Returns looks more like a console game converted to the PC, rather than a PC game based on a console classic. The difference is everything.

Now if you'll excuse me I have to return to the Sentinel, we have an old score to settle...

Ashton Mills

84%

Category Puzzle/Strategy
Players 1-4
Publisher Psygnosis
Price \$79.95
Rating G8+
Available Now

For One of the most brilliant game concepts ever invented since the dawn of gaming. To be able to produce adrenalinising game-play addictiveness without the usual equation of guns and gore is a testament to its brilliance.

Against The bland environment doesn't change much and I didn't find myself getting as addicted as the first time round.

Need P120, 16M RAM, 40M HDD

Want P166, 32Mb RAM

Studio Previews

Sentinel Returns

Written and released in 1995 for the BBC Micro and later to CD-ROM, Sentinel Returns, from Psygnosis and Psygnosis, the original creators of the game, is a true Virtual Reality game. In an era dominated by "arcade" titles such as Formula 1 and Big Red, Sentinel Returns is a true 3D world where your destination is a bright, unpermeable, all-powered, automatic on a square, black, landscape.

With the advent of the Sony PlayStation and PC, the 3D experience comes a long-awaited sequel.

- Themed Play environments - Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Void
- Up to date 3D animated graphics redesign
- Learning curve improved from original
- Music score by John Carpenter (Halloween), featuring hauntingly atmospheric, sound and effects
- Great 1st, 2nd and 3rd person play with "Extraterrestrial" levels and player-vs-player action
- Q-View to give true 3D audio cues to the player

Format: PlayStation and PC CD-ROM

[Click here for more screenshots]

[Click here for other games]

www.psygnosis.com/sentinel

For a bit of history and design screenshots check out the Psygnosis website.

HEART OF DARKNESS

A very nice looking Prince-of-Persia-esque cartoon adventure.

You take the part of a genius schoolkid, Andy, who is hunted by an evil overlord from a dark and dangerous parallel dimension. As a solar eclipse occurs, the dark master's minions use black magic to pull Andy from his grassy hillside into their other-world. Unfortunately the servants responsible weren't exactly rocket scientists and Andy's dog is teleported instead.

Andy loads up his homemade plasma gun, puts on his tech helmet and gets into his flying jet with skateboard wheels. He's off to find his Dog... woe betide anything that gets in his way.

There ends the feature-length animated introduction, which is 3D animation of simply superb quality and goes for about five minutes. Thus, the scene set, you're seamlessly switched into a nicely detailed platform game, plasma gun in hand.

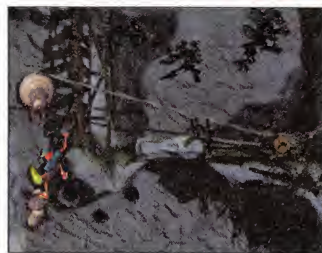


Classic gaming

Heart of Darkness (HOD) is a 2D platform game with near-perfect attention to detail, in your character's movements, backgrounds, animations, sound and gameplay. It reminds me a lot of the classic Prince of Persia, where your agile Arabian character did a lot of running, jumping and climbing in a bloody dangerous, devilishly creative world. HOD has all of these things, as well as great ambient sound, orchestral music and gorgeous cut-scenes between game segments.

Tricky manoeuvres

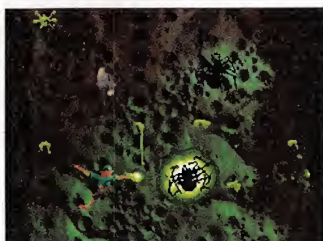
The action ranges from full-on combat scenes where you have to hold off a sustained assault from an army of leaping



nasties with your plasma gun, to the thoughtful and obtuse. For example, a rock cavern you come across in your adventure is shrouded in darkness. You can barely discern the shapes of some indestructible carnivorous plants waiting to devour

Despite the attempts of games such as Claw, the days of the 2D platformer are far from over.

you. It's a dangerous, impossibly lethal scene. However, this cavern is linked by a steep vertical shaft to a room below, which you can access by backtracking down a cliff. Returning there, you have one carnivorous plant guarding a firefly hive which occasionally releases an occu-



pant that is almost surely devoured by the plant. The plants are momentarily harmless while they are eating, so you rush in and jump against the squishy hive, releasing a swarm of fireflies, some of which fly up the shaft. Returning to the higher room, you find it illuminated by the flies, who also give you safe passage as they are eaten by the plants.



This kind of cool, tricky stuff is inherent all the way through HOD. It has a cool consistent story, which develops slowly through the game, reinforced by the excellent cut-scenes. There

are also extensive swimming sections and parts of the landscape you must damage to make them traversable.

Painful death

HOD is unusual for this kind of kiddie-adventure, in the myriad and horrible ways in which Andy kicks the bucket. From a cutscene depicting him plummeting to death, to being swallowed by giant sea anemones and his shorts and sneakers spat out, to simply getting ripped to shreds by the ravenous cave monsters. And countless other instant, gory demises. All this instant death will make you very glad that you have infinite lives! Prepare to play the same short section twenty times or more until you get it right.

The controls are very intuitive, making rope swinging and perilous jumps across chasms to cling/climb up another surface quite simple, although a supreme sense of timing is often required.

Hendry Saunders

The storyline is quite... weird. A kind of "and then he woke up and realised it was all a nightmare" type affair

89%

Category Platform adventure
Players 1
Publisher Amazing/Infogrames
Price \$TBA
Rating G8+
Available Now

For Fresh, original gameplay with brilliant graphics and animation, best FMV sequences we've seen in a long while.

Against You die seemingly thousands of times, the controls are not as instant as simpler platformers like Sonic or Croc.

Need Win95 or WinNT, 486-DX 66, 16 Megs RAM, 1 Meg VESA or PCI graphics card, 2x CD-ROM, 84 megs disk space.

Want P90, 32 Megs RAM, 16-bit stereo sound card, 4x CD-ROM, 84 megs disk space.



PLUS+



<http://www.heartofdarkness.com>

FINAL FANTASY VII

Our Playstation brother, Hyper Ed *Dan Toose*, special guest reviews the PC version of a truly great game.

We can mock at the inferiorities of the consoles next to our genuinely superior gaming PCs, but those in console-land do get their share of good games, and PlayStation owners the world round will vouch that Final Fantasy VII is a must have RPG. Thanks to Eidos securing a publishing deal with Squaresoft, makers of FF7, the PlayStation is not a must have machine if you want to play this fantastic game.

Life sucking force

The aim and plot, like so many RPGs, is to save the world. Unlike most RPGs, the plot is actually a real driving force throughout the game. No, you're not hacking up the latest upstart demon who has decided to shack up in the local abandoned dungeon... This one involves a group of rather messed up individuals (that's you) trying to prevent an



all powerful energy corporation, Shinra, from continuing their mining operations which are literally sucking the life out of the planet. There are also a host of other forces at work that all serve to make the plot deep and full of twists,

creating a real story, rather than a linked series of battles.

Something that really detracts from the feel of a lot of RPGs is that you're always walking down corridors that use those identical grey bricks wherever you go. Final Fantasy VII is a prime example of what can be done when an art department is told to go nuts. Every background is a beautifully drawn bitmap, with depth qualities added so that the 3D polygon characters can move around in a fashion that comes across as being very cinematic. Getting around in the world map is done with a 3D engine that is cute and simple, yet effective and gives a far better feel of your terrain and where you're going.

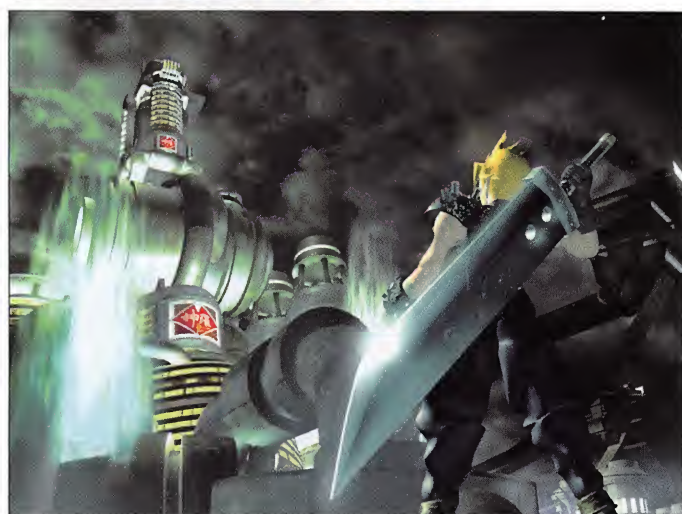
Combat is visually spectacular, with spell and weapon effects making conventional PC RPGs look dull. Everything in combat is 3D polygon based, and those with accelerators (that's most of you by now we hope) will get a better deal than PlayStation gamers did.

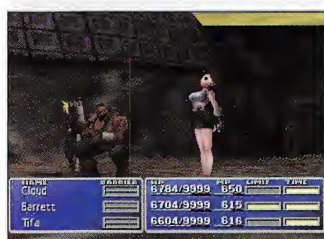


The sub-games and optional quests add extra polish to what is already an involving, and massive, game

Character and charm

Some PC RPG fans will dislike the lack of ability to generate their own characters from scratch, but the plot driven nature of the game, the huge amounts of character dialogue, and the amazing level of depth as to which you can customise





how your party is set up more than makes up for this. In fact the game would lose a lot of its character and charm if you just used player generated characters.

The bottom line to success in an RPG often comes down to how the combat is handled, and FF7 nails it on the head. The combat is essentially turn based, with a real time element added in, so that stuffing around can cost you (or be a tactical advantage) depending on the situation. If you have gripes about how this timing system works, then don't cry. It's customisable so you can make it totally turn based, or the reverse, where the time meter stops for nothing.

An RPG and then some

To break away from the same old, Squaresoft introduced a host of sub games that tie into the game so that



<http://www.eidosinteractive.com/ff7/index.html>



Locations are all painstakingly rendered and cinematic. There's hundreds of them too (left) The battle and magic system is complex and never a chore



when your party of travellers is faced with a non combat situation, you can deal with it with an action based interface. For example, trying to escort a car from your motorbike actually involves riding through the streets, swinging your sword at enemy bikers, in a 3D polygon "racing" game. Other sub games include sub-combat, snowboarding, Chocobo racing (giant chicken races... don't ask), and even formation marching for TV ratings... um, yeah.

Don't you know it's magic?

A standout feature of Final Fantasy VII is the magic system, which quite frankly puts most other RPGs to shame. Throughout the game you acquire "Materia" which is life energy in a crystal form. Different materia give different spells and abilities. With each battle you win, your equipped materia essentially gains

experience and thus becomes more powerful. Not only can you move materia from character to character, thus customising how your three active characters are set up to deal with magic in battle, but you can also pair different materia together to give your character combination effects. Simple combinations like "All & Fire" have obvious effects (fire spells that attack all opponents), but experimentation and some clever planning can result in outstanding results.

Oh, the spells are also turned into wonderful cinematic 3D events, which make combat a joy to watch, without taking away from the strategy.

If you are a fellow hardcore PC RPG gamer that relishes the games like Daggerfall, Lands of Lore II, Might and Magic, and the Ultima titles, don't mistake Final Fantasy VII for some cutesy kid's game.

There's at least 50 hours of gameplay here, with more if you get into the idea of

finding secrets and developing your characters. There's a fantastic plot, tons of extra non-essential quests and secrets to discover, and a combat system that really works well.

Dan Toose

90%

Category PRG
Players 1
Publisher Eidos
Price \$79.95
Rating G8+
Available Now

For Outstanding plot and character development that help make this game a true epic.

Against The cute polish to it all will alienate many hardcore PC RPG fans. No enhancements to PSX interface.

Need P133 with 3D card, P166 without, Win95, 260MB HDD, 32MB RAM

Want P166 + 3D card

3D SUPPORT
Direct3D



QUAKE II: The Reckoning

We're a fickle lot. Do we want new and improved or more of the same? With Quake we'd like a bit of both. Reckoning delivers.

Just when you thought it was safe to go off and play other 3D games, good old reliable Quake II bounces back and proves it ain't dead yet. The Reckoning is the first mission pack for Quake II and it should provide many hours of harmless disembowelment for single and multiplayer Quake II heads. Xatrix haven't made a full-blown Total Conversion based on the Quake II engine, they've just expanded the original game to include some new weapons, enemies and levels which is de rigeur in this day and age of the cheap buck.

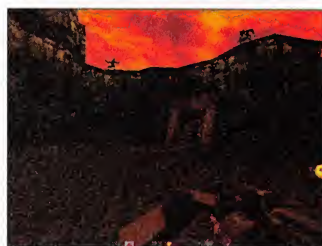
Acid blood, man

The deal this time around is that you are in another pod that broke through the Strogg defenses (gotta love that Big Gun) and crashed in a different part of Stroggos. The Strogg here are a nastier bunch, featuring enhanced troopers with hyperblasters, Repair Bots that walk around showing you where the goodies are and fixing up dead Strogg in the process and the native Gekk, which are jumpy, alien-type thingies that have acid for blood. Hmm, that sounds familiar...perhaps a movie I once saw.

The enemies are also a bit trickier; not because of enhanced AI but because they are more



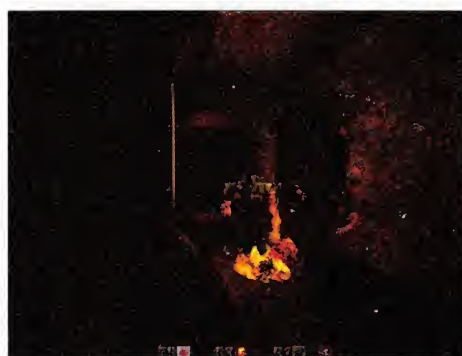
We reckon The Reckoning is quite good, though there's only a couple of new weapons, and a great selection of multiplayer maps



carefully placed so they don't look stupid or get stuck behind doorways. There are also more of them on a level making it a greater challenge to get through relatively unscathed. Xatrix have really done well here, giving people who tore through the original game fairly quickly a real challenge this time around.

2 1/2 new weapons

The Reckoning also features 2 1/2 new weapons to keep you amused; two new guns and one new (and only) trap. Unfortunately, they're nothing more than some interesting visu-



thing. You basically prime it and throw it to the ground like a grenade, and any creature (including you) that walks close enough to its radius gets sucked in and processed into a neat little alien-burgers.

There are 30 new maps to play with in



total; 15 single player and 15 multiplayer. The single player maps feature some excellent levels with large outdoor areas and detailed architecture that oozes quality. In actual fact, the outdoor areas are not that much larger than the standard Quake II levels, but they are better designed, more asymmetrical and have more natural textures to give the impression that you really are walking around the canyons of a barren, alien planet. The new sky textures also look better than the originals, but are still a static bitmap affair.

The multiplayer maps rock



It's the professionalism of the level design that sets this apart from the free, downloadable, home user created TCs

hard, and hats are definitely off to Xatrix for pumping some quality time into making sure the levels are very playable. I'd heartily recommend this expansion pack on the merits of the Deathmatch maps - they're that good.

Patch work

One thing that has to be mentioned and is really beginning to annoy the crap out of the Quake II community is the fact that this mission pack introduces a new version of the executable, 3.15. Don't get me wrong, fixing bugs in a game is a very good thing and it shows the publisher's commitment to a game post-release. But this many patches in this amount of time has tested the sanity of many id devotees, espe-



(above) The particle cannon, one of the coolest new weapons in the pack - big booms!



cially when you consider every new patch has rendered saved games useless. For the families of those of people who have made every upgrade from 3.05 to now and have still not finished the game, my sincerest condolences.

All in all a very well put together pack that offers some more single player missions to get through and more importantly, some excel-



lent deathmatch levels to prove your gun is bigger than the other guys'. Xatrix have been forgiven for that completely ordinary game, Redneck Rampage.

George Argy

82%

Category 1st Person shooter
Players 1-20
Publisher Activision
Price \$49.95
Rating MA15+
Available Now

For Excellent level design. Great multiplayer maps. Challenging single player game.

Against New weapons are nothing special. Yet another (sigh) exe patch.

Need P90, 16MB RAM, Win95, 4x CD-ROM

Want P200, 32MB RAM, 3D card, 8x CD

3D SUPPORT

OpenGL, PowerSGL, Redline

X-COM: Interceptor

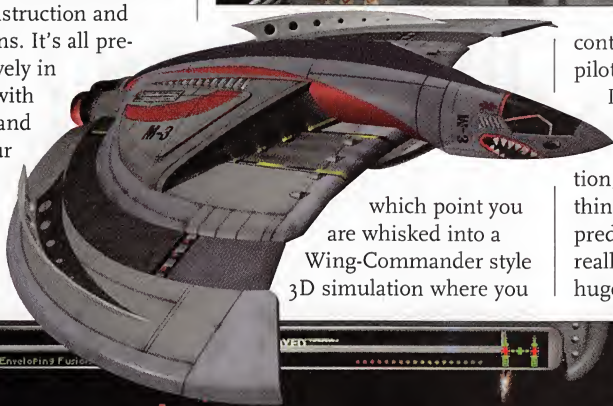
Take out the little green guys in a deadly space technology race with bonus dogfighting!

You assume the role of director of the X-Com crew, the spaceflight army of Men-In-Black dudes defending Earth and its colonies from the ongoing threat of hostile Alien forces. You supervise finance, space station construction, weaponry purchase, pilot patrols and strategic research to build better combat gear, faster than the extraterrestrials do.

As you explore and secure more space in the galaxy, your corporate buddies snap up the financial opportunities in the asteroid belts and solar systems, hence increasing your income. You have a myriad of options in the directions you can take in establishing your force.

Multiple dimensions

The main view shows the galaxy and its occupation as it stands, from there you branch out into your finance, weaponry, personnel, construction and research screens. It's all presented exclusively in very nice 2D, with graphs, maps and stats on all your resources, until you engage the enemy in a dogfight, at



which point you are whisked into a Wing-Commander style 3D simulation where you

control one of your pilots in-battle.

It's a fairly straight-forward space simulation, with a few things like pipper predictions, but it really shines in the huge range of gear

you can develop and outfit your fighters with. Your fighters are also fully customizable, with user-defined loadouts and armoury/equipment. You can also customize the purpose of each base, adding modules as they become necessary to house more pilots, fighters, hospitals or factories.

Counter-Tactics

As you drive back the lizard-necked scum, you get to take out their outposts and heavier vehicles in the 3D flight mode,



Finally realising the value of the X-COM universe, Microprose are branching out from pure strategy. Next up is the Unreal-engine based X-COM: Alliance

which is just excellent. The larger bases and craft really look pretty good considering it's a game within a game. It also real-





ly takes some very specific counter-tactics to take control in later stages, especially when assaulting a big target like a base. You need to have researched exactly the right stuff to have any chance of taking them out.

The Aliens start off with quite a big technology lead, so rapid research is very necessary to get



you a footing in the early incursions. This takes the form of ordering your crew of scientists, safely based on a corporate settlement, to get cracking on the subject of choice. When they finish the job, the info is downloaded to your base via tricky interspace



(right) The game's only weakness is the "porthole" view of the universe



modem devices. Sometimes, when you play well, you find yourself at a marvellous advantage over the Roswell boys, for example;

when I developed the laser train very early in the game and gained the supreme Gatling Laser well ahead of schedule. I initiated a rash frontal assault and chopped the inferior punks to pieces!

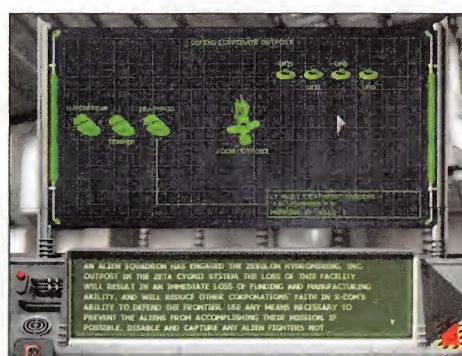
You can research wreckage from the Alien craft to glean secrets from it and even research recovered Alien bodies to learn about their biological makeup, creating weapons that focus on their weaknesses.

Random universe
Every time you start the game, a totally random



human settlement is generated along with a random alien force to contend with. This makes the game superbly replayable! Even things like the pilot's statistics are randomized, further re-inventing the game each time you play.

Hendry Saunders



77%

Category Resource management/Space flight sim
Players 1-8
Publisher EA Sports
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For A deeply, complicated, versatile space domination game, with good replay value. The space-flight is really not too foul, considering it's secondary to the game.

Against Runs a little too slowly for those wanting constant action, the in-game graphics are not marvellous either. It's mostly a cerebral game of painfully gradual strategem, although you can speed up the time scale (thank god).

Need P133 with 3D accelerator, P166 without, 16 Megs RAM, CD-ROM, Win95, 2 meg SVGA Video card, mouse.

Want P166 with 3D accelerator, 4x CD-ROM

3D SUPPORT

Direct3D support

WORLD CUP 98

EA Sports are still striving to provide a perfect simulation of 'jogo bonito', the beautiful game. They haven't quite got there, but they're getting closer.

If you've been left with a bitter taste in your mouth after a boring World Cup final, or been enthused by the magnificence of the best players in the world playing the beautiful game that is football, then you might want to jump into the comfy PC chair and play your own World Cup, rewriting history in the way you want it.

World Cup 98, as we've said before, isn't FIFA 99. It is purely and simply a game that uses a slightly modified FIFA 98 engine that has been released at the same time as the World Cup to cash in upon the heightened appreciation of football at that time.



Still, WC98 is good enough to claim a space on the gaming shelf alongside FIFA 98, especially since EA have been kind enough to pretend that we didn't crumple on that fateful day in November and included Australia in the finals.

Intelligent 'keepers

But there are still a number of areas that require improvement, though by the time you read this there should at least be a patch out for some of the more glaring errors. One of the most annoying problems is with the goalkeepers - which has long been a problem for the FIFA series since the beginning. One of the big selling

points of WC98 was the improvement to the 'keeper AI - we were told that the keepers would be a lot harder to beat this time around. For the most part, my expectations have been reached. The 'keepers are much better than in FIFA 98 (even post-patch), and I've yet to see any of them acting as 'stupidly' as in FIFA 98.

Also, rather than having the 'Gloves of Glue +29' as with FIFA 98, the 'keepers find it much harder to catch balls from shots, and will often parry the ball away for a corner, or back into play, which is a very nice touch. However, the bugs for the 'keepers are most noticeable during corners. On almost every

Though it isn't evident in still pictures, the players move even more fluidly this time around

occasion that a corner is taken the keeper will run out to the ball and punch it away. Now, this does happen in real games occasionally, but not at every corner, and you end up having to pass the ball outside the box to have any chance of a header or bicycle kick from a corner.

What's new, pussycat?

On the plus side though, there are a number of notable improvements over FIFA 98. The engine

has been slightly improved, and the player animation is a little more detailed, though the animation was already excellent. In terms of gameplay EA have seen fit to introduce some worthy new features as well. Formations can now be changed 'on the fly' during a game. You can set three formations before (or during) a game, and change at any time. However, you can't set player positions for each formation - so changing from 4-4-2 to a more defensive 5-4-1 formation results in one of your strikers becoming a sweeper - obviously not an optimum solution.

Another area of concern with FIFA 98 was the team management screens - very pretty to look at, but nigh impossible to use. WC98 is an improvement, but EA are still giving preference to looks over functionality. Positioning your players is easier with





WC 98, but you still don't get to see how this really looks on the field, you can't set 'zones' for player defence, and this aspect is still mostly for show rather than a valid tactical option. The substitution menu is better, and less likely to result in 'accidental' changes, but you still don't have all your team on the screen at once to get an overall view. One of the new options available is the 'man marking' section, where you can nominate which players mark opposition players - but again the interface is rudimentary and not very useful at all. It's very annoying, because aspects like these aren't difficult to implement, and would add immeasurably to the overall experience of playing the game. Still work to be done here by EA.

Liquid gameplay

The gameplay is still good though, and a more responsive

input system makes for more fluid play once you get the hang of it, with one touch passes and flowing movements across the pitch being commonplace. There are a number of new 'skill moves' (though because the manual included is, as usual, pathetic, you'll have to do some digging to find them out), including springing an offside trap, sending a wing back on an attacking run, and telling your forward to make a run for a through ball. There is also a couple of new manoeuvres for your players to make as well.

As the name of the game suggests, you can only play with national teams in the World Cup (though friendlies are still avail-

able), but once you win the World Cup some of the great WC games of yesteryear become available, like Brazil v Italy from 1970 (Pele, Bertini). There's 8 in total going all the way back to Argentina v Uruguay in 1930.

WC 98 is only concerned with the World Cup, so there isn't quite enough in there for me to recommend it to football sim virgins (FIFA 98 is still the go, or wait a little while for FIFA 99), but for those that love their football and want to relive the majesty that was the World Cup, then this is a worthy addition to the gaming shelf, although more improvements could and *should* have been made.

Gareth Jones



An impressively detailed learning curve is available, though even on the easiest settings it's quite diffi

There's even a few new post-goal moves, including the keeper kicking the camera

PLUS+



WORLD CUP 98 ONLINE

<http://www.fifagaming.com/wc98>
- World Cup 98 Online
The premier unofficial WC 98 site, with everything you'll ever need to know about the game.

84%

Category Football Sim
Players 1-20 (Modem/network only. Up to 4 players at one PC, max 5 PC's networked)
Publisher EA Sports
Price \$79.95
Rating G8+
Available Now

For More moves, updated animations, better management screens, better control system, (marginally) less stupid commentary, and classic games of yore to play, as well as Australia.

Against Management aspect is still mostly crap compared to how it should be, and goalies are way too good at corners. Only World Cup games available, and there isn't that much that has been improved upon from FIFA 98 in terms of gameplay.

Need P100, 16MB RAM, Win '95, 4XCD

Want P200, 64MB RAM, 3Dfx/Voodoo2, 8 Button Gamepad

EXTREME TACTICS

Ever wanted to design your own RTS units? Don a Labcoat in this unusual strategy game.

These days, any game that is even remotely successful is relentlessly cloned by rival companies looking to get a piece of the action. Examples of this somewhat disturbing trend manifest themselves in the form of pioneering games like *Dune* and *Doom*. Because clones rarely add anything interesting to the original concept, innovative titles are in very high demand. *Extreme Tactics* is the next contender to enter the fray in an attempt to breathe new life into the stagnating Real Time Strategy (RTS) genre.



Designer war

On every RTS game wish-list in recent memory, there has always been a request for the ability to design your own units. Just the thought is enough to get most RTS gamers drooling! Media Station is the first company to develop a game that offers this feature and I'm certain it won't be the last.

ET's resource management system is almost identical to those used in many other RTS games; Coolar crystals provide power and Calibrium ore is mined to provide



It's a "drag & select good little guys & click on bad little guys" game

there are eight basic types available to each side. Weapons mounts can be sacrificed for either additional shielding or stealth devices.

Bastard tactics

In total, there are literally thousands of possible unit configurations. In addition to the units designed by the player, there are a number of static units which have been designed by Media Station that can't be modified. The majority of these units are mining vehicles and the like, but one unit in particular deserves a mention. This unit is known as a "pod". Pods are remote-piloted and are used to infect enemy units with computer viruses. Once infected, the unit comes under the player's command and anything seen by that unit will be seen by the player. The player can then allow the unit to go about its business or use it to attack its own side. Both



metal for unit production. But when it comes to the units themselves, the similarities stop. The unit designer is, you guessed it, the tool which you use to design the weapons at your disposal. The first thing to select is the unit's chassis

which ranges in size and armour strength from the tiny Scout to the hulking Fortress. The larger the chassis, the more weapons, shielding and electronic devices it can accommodate. Next on the order of business is the unit's mode of transport. There are six basic types to choose from; wheels, tank treads, walker legs, spider legs, fly jets and hover generators. Weapons are the next choice and



Design your own units, but use your imagination while playing, as they all look the same.

had was an excellent concept. Unfortunately, a lot was lost in the transition from concept to reality. If unit appearances didn't make playing so tedious, this game would have received a higher rating. If you've got loads of money and can afford to throw some away, go out and buy Extreme Tactics; even if only to satisfy your curiosity. But if you're like most people and have to save your cash for a few good titles each year, I suggest you wait for the release of Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun.

Brett Robinson

these strategies, when combined, allow for infiltration and destruction of the enemy's base.

In addition to the standard campaign mode, there is a skirmish mode and a rather lackluster training mode. There's also a multiplayer

mode which allows up to four players to compete over the internet or a LAN.

Unfortunately, the graphics found in ET are a poor in comparison to every other RTS game, with the possible exception of "Z". While the backgrounds look spectacular, the units look absolutely shocking. When the view is zoomed out, units look very grainy and fragmented. When the view is zoomed in, their appearance is passable, but every strategy gamer knows that it's impossible to play competently when only a fraction of the map can be seen at any one time.

And, the bad news...

While the whole concept of being able to design your own units is ingenious, but what works in theory doesn't necessarily work in reality. ET has a

superbly intuitive interface and AI that puts every other RTS game to shame, and for that Media Station is to be commended. But this is all overshadowed by three terminal problems. Despite its poor visual quality, ET runs extremely slowly and jerkily on a Pentium 200; don't believe the minimum requirements for a second! The second problem is even more severe than this. Every unit's basic appearance is determined by its mode of transport. In essence, this means that there are only six basic unit appearances! This gives you about ten minutes of enjoyable gameplay before tedium sets in! And then there's the fact that there are only eleven campaign missions available for each side. However, this is something of a moot point as you won't want to play either campaign through to its conclusion anyway. What Media Station



<http://www.mediastation.com>
Those unfortunate enough to own the game can download new unit designs from the official site.

61%

Category	RTS
Players	1-4
Publisher	Media Station/ Mindscape
Price	\$TBA
Rating	G8+
Available	Now
For	Innovative concept. Insomniacs rejoice; a cure has been found
Against	Abysmal graphics. Bad news if you play this to keep yourself awake until the soccer comes on.
Need	P100, Win95, P90, 16 Megs RAM, 4X CD-ROM, 30 Megs Hard Drive Space
Want	PII/266, 32Mb RAM

ALIEN EARTH

Very much the formula, derivative Adventure game, Beam's Alien Earth is also sadly short of gameplay.

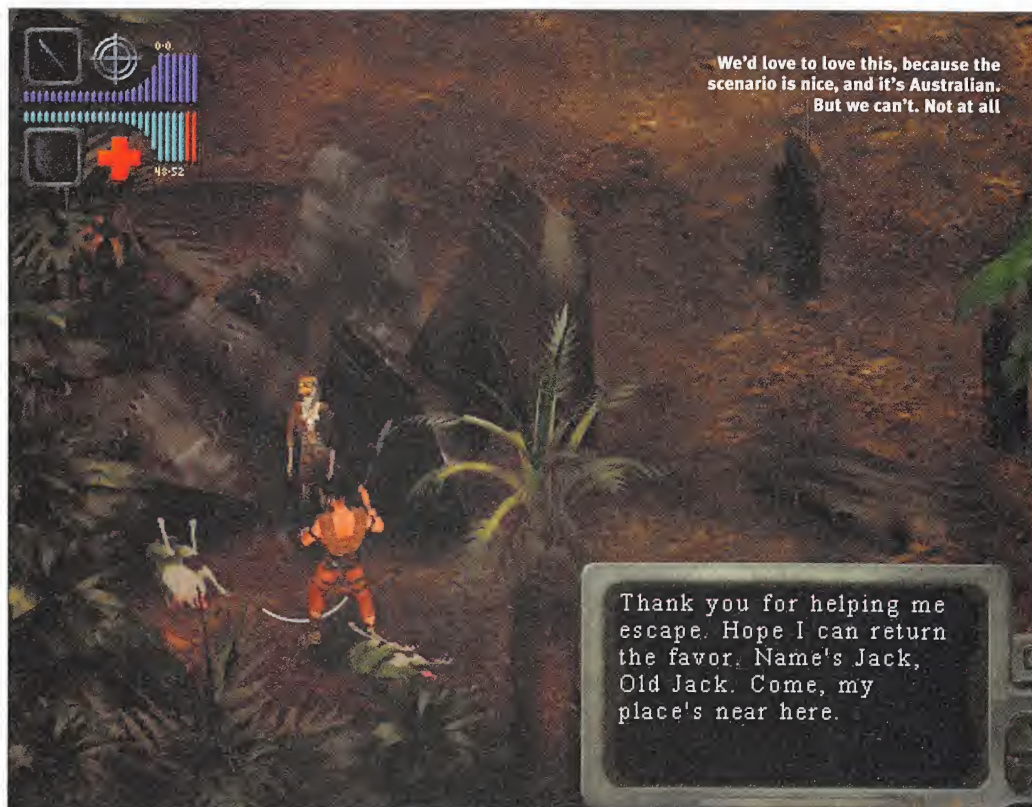
For me, there's something seriously wrong with any game in which I spend more time staring at loading screens than I do actually playing the game. Particularly when the loading screen in question is one of the duller in existence. And I should know, too. I've had the opportunity to become extremely well-acquainted with it over the past few days. It's just a circle with the words "Alien Earth Loading". Whether you consider this a major concern depends upon how much you enjoy watching the game grind to a halt every couple of minutes while the next (usually quite small) location is loaded up. Personally, I had gnawed my knuckles down to the bone by the end of the first stage.

Fringe-dwelling lunatics

But this is the least of Alien Earth's troubles. Admittedly, the plot has potential. It's a post-alien invasion scenario in which the human race seems to have devolved and now lives amid the wreckage of the 20th century. At the start of the game you find yourself being sacrificed to your new alien masters. This involves a contest whereby you are released from your village and hunted down by a creature called the Raksha. On the run, you encounter all kinds of fringe-dwelling lunatics scavenging their lives in burnt-out cinemas and numerous revolting beasts, mutant and dangerous, intent upon assisting your demise. The lost human civilisation premise is executed quite well. Early on I found the so-called Temple of Comtel, where the "ancients" apparently spoke with the gods. Closer inspection revealed it to be a row of telephone booths.

Wooden

The top-down view of the game world affords some extremely pretty scenery, but the animation is uniformly



Pretty ordinary

Ultimately, Alien Earth is one of those hybrid action/adventure with RPG flavouring things that always sound so promising in theory, but in practice everything falls apart. Each element, whether it be the combat or the puzzle-solving or the character interac-

tion, is pretty ordinary when viewed in isolation. Combined, these disparate and shoddily-implemented features produce a messy, second-rate game. If Beam had taken the time to get even one aspect right; if they had made the combat challenging instead of a chore or the various characters genuinely interesting to chat with (as opposed to just weird and obscure) or if the design had been less stifflingly linear, then Alien Earth might have proved a decent game. As it is, though, this remains painfully mediocre.

David Wildgoose

54%

Category Action/Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Playmates/Beam
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For A promising post-apocalyptic scenario. The background graphics are good...

Against ...but the animation isn't. Braindead combat, dull NPCs, and control problems. The mixed game-play elements fail to gel together.

Need P90, 16Mb RAM, Win95

Want P166, 12xCD

SOLDIERS AT WAR

"Squad level tactical combat" they call it. A "New Genre" too. Big call and very wrong. Nice game though...

Roll credits. In the grand tradition of X-Com and Incubation. From the creators of Wages Of War. Comes an SSI production, starring Nick Tyson, Drew Caldwell, and Felix Novak. (Cue incredibly loud gunshot noise)...Soldiers At War! Roll montage of khaki-coloured men crawling through mud, diving for cover as a jeep explodes behind them, collapsing dramatically after being hit in the chest, lobbing grenades over barbed-wire bunkers, and hugging manfully when it's all over.

Rather than a meticulously accurate portrayal of World War II, Soldiers At War promises to recreate the thrills and excitement of the best war movies Hollywood has to offer. So I settled down with a medium popcorn and large bag of Maltesers to enjoy the latest in the small, but perfectly formed "squad level tactical combat" genre.

What is it good for?

At the start of the campaign, you need to select your squad of up to eight soldiers. There are 32 blokes to choose from, each with varying skills (such as differing weaponry expertise, while some have medical or explosives abilities) and rank. Be warned, however, as these guys have to last you over the entire series of 18 scenarios. This means there is some degree of strategy concerning who to take on certain missions, since you don't want to

lose all your experienced men in the early stages. Although, if you're like me, then you will just keep restarting if any of the veterans (like the aforementioned Nick Tyson - what a legend) don't survive. Next it's off to kit them out in all kinds of rifles, sub-machine guns, bazookas, grenades, and flamethrowers, as well as less glamorous utilities including medikits, smoke bombs, metal detectors, etc.

You're there

Missions are reasonably varied, offering challenges from the simple wipe out the enemy to the more complex tasks of rescuing prisoners, destroying communication towers or capturing enemy plans. It's gratifying to discover each mission feels like genuine combat, as opposed to the puzzle-solving style of Incubation. Similarly, the range of actions available to your men creates a far more atmospheric and rewarding game. Rarely have I felt such tension in this type of game than while watching my troops huddle beneath shattered windows as gunfire rains overhead or seeing them crawl across



bridges with virtually no protection whatsoever. This is where these games gain victory against their real-time combat rivals (Total Annihilation, Starcraft, etc) - in Soldiers At War the action is on a scale small enough for you to truly feel the fear, to see the whites of your enemies' eyes.

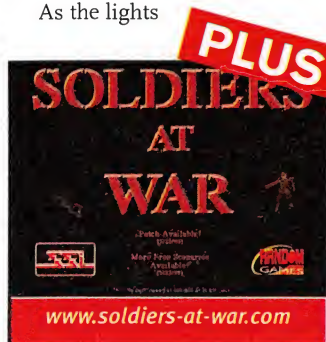
Troubling annoyances

There are some troubling annoyances, but these are mainly confined to the awkward interface. The Slide-Out Interface (which details plenty of pretty obvious and non-essential info) is way too big and consequently obscures much of the action. I was also confounded at times by the option to keep the interior of unexplored buildings hidden. Occasionally I was able to see and shoot someone, but I couldn't see the room they were in. Possibly this is because the line-of-sight calculations are exceedingly precise and enable accurate shooting through several windows across crowded rooms. But you get used to all this and it doesn't harm the gameplay. As the lights

The small-scale tactical combat game might be a fresh new alternative, if the strengths of Soldiers at War and the upcoming Commandos are anything to go on

came on and the curtain closed, I rose from my hopelessly uncomfortable cinema seat feeling pleasantly surprised. Soldiers At War is a fine game, good enough to sustain damage from several potentially problematic flaws without crippling the atmosphere or your enjoyment. Four stars, then?

David Wildgoose



80%

Category Tactical Combat
Players 1-4
Publisher SSI
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Gripping and (mostly) realistic gameplay. Nicely-structured campaign. Includes scenario editor.

Against No hotseat multi-play. A couple of interface problems.

Need P120, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P166, 32Mb RAM

Anastasia

CATEGORY	Disney merchandise
PLAYERS	1
PUBLISHER	Fox Interactive
PRICE	\$TBA
RATING	G
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	486/66, 8Mb RAM, 2xCD
WANT	Pentium, 16Mb RAM

So, there's an adorably sweet puppy named Pooka, a deranged, yet all-knowing bat called Bartok, a nice young orphan girl who might possibly really be Princess Anastasia, and Dimitri, the man who falls in love with her. It couldn't be a Disney movie, could it?

No, it's worse than that. It's a Disney Interactive Movie Storybook Adventure. Or something. Similar in intent to the briefly amusing Muppets' Treasure Island CD ROM of a couple of years back, Anastasia offers an edited highlights package with which to relive your favourite scenes from the film of the same name. A chance for

the kids of the world to revisit the Europe Anastasia lives in and the host of friendly (and not-so-friendly) characters she meets along the way. So it's not the cheap, cynical, etc, cash-in that I had initially expected, then.

But, of course, that's exactly what it is. This is just rubbish. Sure, I realise that kids play and somehow manage to enjoy rubbish games. Most film licensed games are developed with this in mind, incidentally. You know what they're

thinking when they make these games - hey, we've got "unnamed film hero x" as the main character, we don't need to bother writing a decent or original game. The kids will play anything.

But what they won't play is a short, humourless, confusing and



Unfortunately, kids have not yet developed the cynical attitude that would sense exploitations like this a mile off. Shame, Disney, shame

BORING game. This is an incredibly basic adventure game that features about three puzzles (one of which is far too tough for an eight year old), loads of pretty but empty scenes (there's absolutely nothing to do in at least half of them), a staggeringly paltry amount of animated characters, some bewildering view changes all triggered by a hamfisted interface, and, most incredibly of all, no sign of Anastasia herself (outside of the accompanying book full of stills from the movie).

David Wildgoose

overall

20%

Buy the video instead. It's better and cheaper.



Nightmare Creatures

CATEGORY	Action
PLAYERS	1
PUBLISHER	Kalisto
PRICE	\$TBA
RATING	M
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P133, 16MB RAM, Win 95
WANT	32MB RAM, Graphics accelerator.

In 1854 on London's blackest eve, Adam Crowley, the evil leader of the Brotherhood of Hecate, rediscovered the key to man's unholy fears. And through the arcane act of terror that would soon follow, Crowley swore to overtake the world. Ever since that fateful night, not a London street, alley or town square has escaped the whispered screams of 'Nightmare Creatures!'.

Crikey! It'd be an English Gothic adventure then! Created by the French! Ever since Dark Earth wowed us with its detailed and lush graphics, Kalisto have been noted to get people's attention when they announce a new game. Nightmare Creatures is but one of their latest, and true to fashion, a complete visual stunner.

In fact, Nightmare Creatures' greatest strength is the atmosphere created through the visuals and sound. Dark, English streets with atmospheric lighting, plenty of dimly lit corners and a truly gruesome monster design (true to the game's title). Accompanying this is an gloriously terrifying soundtrack. Eerie bells and whistles, a large

In the 1800's, women dressed in skimpy skin tight clothes in the middle of winter, at night, in order to battle demons

dose of howling wind and the occasional growl of some unnatural beast can be heard in the distance. Kalisto really know how to get the player immersed in their creations, because the first few minutes of Nightmare Creatures had me terrified.

This is where it starts to go downhill though. Best described as a 3D beat up with a Tomb Raider feel (engine and perspective, not style of game), playing NC imparts the feeling that Kalisto were holding back with something. Featuring a stack of moves to maim, dismember and generally hurt your opponents, combat plays a major role in the game. Since the game uses a similar engine to Tomb Raider (which made combat very tricky), you never feel fully in control, and fall victim to death by poor controls. Then after pressing on you discover a little flaw in



design (I won't spoil it for you) where combat becomes a chore, rather than a challenge.

Not at all a disaster, Nightmare Creatures is a fun game to play when you want a quick escape to Gothic London for a bit of a slog fest. A high difficulty level and design flaws keeps this one for occasions. Be prepared to be frustrated.

March Stepnik

overall

79%

Great setting, atmosphere & graphics. Too bad it's a 3D beat-em-up rather than an H.P. Lovecraft-ish adventure though

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CREATIVE
CREATIVE PACIFIC

invites Gamers to attend a Sydney Gamer Night for

Activision are inviting 1,000 gamers to an **exclusive** walk thru and preview of the new PC game **SIN**. Production team members from both **Activision** and **Ritual Entertainment** will be there to **demonstrate** the game and **answer any questions** from the floor.

The Sydney gamer night will be held on the evening of **September 1, 1998** at **Sydney University Wentworth Centre**. The promotion offers gamers a chance to be the **first worldwide** to see **SIN**, meet with developers and go into the draw to win the latest **Creative Pacific Blaster PC** with **\$1,000** worth of **Activision** games.

To reserve seats at this exclusive **premiere** of **SIN**, gamers will need to email their details to sin@activision.com.au or contact Activision on (02) 9869 0955. The **first 1,000** respondents will be sent an invitation to attend the **Activision SIN** gamer night.

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Comanche Gold

CATEGORY	Flight Sim
PLAYERS	1-6 (LAN)
PUBLISHER	Novalogic
PRICE	\$89.95
RATING	G8+
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P133
WANT	P166 and 32 MB RAM

overall

85%

CG has overcome some of the limitations in Comanche 3 and provides upgunned gameplay and many challenging and realistic missions.

Comanche Gold (CG) includes the 32 missions that came with Comanche 3, and 51 new missions, giving 83 missions in total if you include training missions. New to the game is a weapons loadout screen and a mission generator. Unfortunately the latter is not very intuitive and can't edit terrain or make bases. Nonetheless, it's great for the quick generation of simple missions.

The new missions are based on five scenarios; Cambodia, Kyrgystan (just above Afghanistan), Mongolia, Sakhalin Island, and to my amazement, the Indonesian Archipelago! The latter is fascinating and based on a series of incidents rooted on civil unrest in Indonesia after the fictitious death of the nation's President. Terrorists abound in small nations formed within the Archipelago. They have the cash to buy high-tech hardware and Sydney is targeted by a group with chemical weapons bent on destabilising the region. You've got to help the



Indonesian and Australian Governments stop them! Good stuff! A realistic worry in the post 2000 world.

The Voxel Space2 graphics have been upgunned to 800x600 for those of us lucky enough to have Pentium IIs, and rain and snow really add a fresh dimension to many of the new missions. The weapons systems now sport the latest generation top attack Hellfires, and AI on

both sides has been improved to make challenging missions very difficult indeed.

It's not Longbow2, but CG is fun and dazzling, and cooperative multiplayer missions are a real hoot! If you own Comanche 3 you might be a little disappointed if you make this purchase, but if you've not yet spent the dollars and you're after a great sim; this is it!

Major Ian Lindgren

Street Fighter Alpha 2

CATEGORY	Fighting
PLAYERS	1-2
PUBLISHER	Capcom
PRICE	\$TBA
RATING	M
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P100, 16Mb RAM
WANT	P200, 32Mb RAM

overall

69%

If you must have a 2D fighting game on your PC, then this is probably your best bet. But, really, ask yourself why!?

The fighting game has never really met with much success on the PC, especially when you consider the immense popularity of the one-on-one combat of the likes of Virtua Fighter or Tekken with our console gaming friends. Conversions of console games have been disappointingly lacklustre, while original PC fighting games (FX Fighter, Rise of the bloody Robots, for example) have yet to scale any great heights. Perhaps (and hopefully) we will witness a renewal of interest in the genre in the wake of new titles such as Die By The Sword. We shall see.

However, I can't imagine Streetfighter Alpha 2 generating much excitement. For a start, it's a conversion of an aging game. I don't recall when the arcade original or Playstation versions were released, but it seems like years now. Compared to the latest 3D version, SFA2 appears positively archaic. Yet, taken on its own terms, this is a competent conversion. There's a host of characters to play and the moves and combos remain faithful to the original. Only the slightly



jerky animation and chunky graphics let the side down.

Of course, the biggest problem with all PC fighting games, and which SFA2 suffers from more than most, is that they lack the big-screen thrills of the arcade. Sitting at your desk tapping on the keyboard or gamepad might provide the occasional invigorating rush, but it's surely not the best place to experience this sort of game. And if you do



enjoy fighting games, then you undoubtedly have a console with a wider variety of better titles to choose from.

David Wildgoose

Addiction Pinball

One of the first "wow" features that hits you in Addiction Pinball is the environment reflection off the chrome pinball. As it skates about the board, the colours and shapes of the lights and table underneath it roll across its surface lazily, almost effortlessly. In fact, the one keyword we would use to describe the code is "whoosh!" - It's very, very clean.

But not only does the game rock technically, its contents are deeply creative as well. It's filled to the brim with surprising, funky features that spill out slowly as the hours clock up. There are more sub-games within than you can find in several days of play. For instance the Alien Safari and Super Sheep games are composed of hitting a particular part of the board to "shoot" one of your targets.

The Worms table is completely characteristic, with most events producing a series of gunshots, "bomb" game themes (e.g. banana bombs mode where each hit = 4 million points), the crate icon that gives you power

modes when all letters are shown up, and so on. The World Rally challenge board is a revhead's paradise with engine revving, skidding, smash animations and chequered flags, along with a racing techno beat.



Addiction Pinball also has selectable play viewpoints, five in total. The player can select the angle they find most playable, in-game, on the fly. None of the views require scrolling during play, the entire board is displayed on screen, and the myriad



THE pinball game to own.... for those that insist their Thrustmaster Flippers peripherals were a worthwhile & sensible purchase

of graphics modes available really show off the marvelous attention to detail the Team17 boys have put into this game.

Addiction Pinball is the Pinball Association's number one choice of sim. We have no trouble wholeheartedly agreeing with their sentiments, and I would not hesitate to recommend this game to any pinball enthusiast.

Hendry Saunders

CATEGORY Pinball Sim

PLAYERS 1-4

PUBLISHER Microprose

PRICE \$59.95

RATING G

AVAILABLE Now

NEED Windows 95/NT 4.0, P75, 16MB RAM, 2XCD

WANT Thrustmaster Flippers, Phillips Virtual Pinball Peripherals

overall

90%

Glorious graphics, prolifically creative design, excellent music and flawless gameplay.

Jazz Jackrabbit 2

The original Jazz Jackrabbit appeared at an odd time in the development of the PC games industry. Earlier in the 90s, before Lara Croft was even a twinkle in the eye of some keen young Core Designer, the search was on in earnest to discover the first PC gaming icon. In the wake of the extraordinary success of Sega's Sonic The Hedgehog (and, to a lesser extent, Nintendo's Mario), it was every publisher's dream to manufacture an equivalent flagship character. Hence, Jazz Jackrabbit.

Erm, it didn't really work, did it? Nonetheless, Jazz was a decent platformer on a machine that, at the time, could offer very little in the way of competition. And it must have won a few fans for itself, I suppose, or else Epic wouldn't have bothered with this sequel. What we have here, then, is a fairly uncomplicated 2D platformer with a likeable hero, some vibrant visuals, and a couple of neat twists on a traditional formula.

Jazz himself looks pretty much identical now as he did

then (while his sidekick, Spaz, is just Jazz with red hair - though I can't remember if he was in the first game or not), but the big improvement comes in the scenery. At the highest resolution, with all kinds of parallax scrolling going on and loads of niftily animated critters packed on screen, Jazz 2 begins to look really nice - in an "old school" kind of way. Jazz sports a useful range of weapons (laser pistol, bouncy-bullet gun, grenade launcher), can use his ears as a temporary helicopter and even rolls into a ball (Sonic-style) to speed through bits of the level.

As far as new features go, there are several multi-player options to enjoy (including, thank heavens, a split-screen capture-the-flag romp) and a level creation kit (which, although a good idea in theory, turns out to be a real chore to use properly, and so I suspect



Little known fact: Jazz Jackrabbit made a brief yet stunning cameo in the first benchmark for 3D action games; Doom. Maybe

very few Jazz 2 levels will ever be made from it). But, honestly, in pure gameplay terms, there's nothing here you haven't already seen before.

David Wildgoose

CATEGORY Platformer

PLAYERS 1-4

PUBLISHER Epic Megagames

PRICE \$TBA

RATING G

AVAILABLE Now

NEED Pentium, 16Mb RAM

WANT P133, gamepad

overall

65%

Bog standard platform action. Nothing wrong with that

F22 ADF: Red Sea Operations Expansion Disk

CATEGORY	Flight Sim
PLAYERS	1-multiple via Internet
PUBLISHER	Ocean
PRICE	\$TBA
RATING	G8+
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P166
WANT	P233, 32 MB RAM and 3Dfx Card.

overall

85%

Some minor tweaks, the latest patch and 37 new missions that present a real challenge.

I reviewed F22 ADF back in February and indicated that it was the most realistic simulation of the F22 Raptor to date. I still stand by my initial opinion. Red Sea Operations (RSO) builds on F22 ADF by adding 37 new missions, a weapons loadout capability, but unfortunately, RSO fails to address the main criticisms of the original game because it still does not have dynamic campaigns or a mission generator.

Four new campaigns are added, all based on the troubled Middle East early in the next century. Surprisingly, no new terrain has been added. The new campaigns build on the existing solidly built missions. The additions are Yemen vs Saudi Arabia, Egypt vs Sudan, United Ethiopia/Yemen vs Saudi Arabia and for the masterminds, five more AWACS missions. Let me tell you that the United Ethiopia/Yemen vs Saudi Arabia missions sees some of the hottest dogfighting action I have seen, and the AWACS missions last several hours and really test your mental strength.



My full review of F22 ADF can be found in the February Edition or at www.hyperactive.com.au. One of the many things that makes this game great is its realistic simulation of weapon systems and its ability to let you fly in an F22, or jump back and forth into an AWACS. The latter lets you take command of an Air Theatre of Operations and be responsible for directing all friendly air traf-

More than enough missions to quell your high-tech blood lust.

fic. It's extraordinary!

If you enjoyed the original F22 ADF and if you really liked the skill that was required to control a theatre via AWACS, then RSO is a must get tour of duty expansion pack.

Maj. Ian Lindgren

Panzer Commander

CATEGORY	Tank Sim
PLAYERS	1-6 (LAN)
PUBLISHER	SSI
PRICE	\$39.95
RATING	G
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P133
WANT	P166 and 32 MB RAM

overall

58%

Back to the drawing board guys! Gameplay makes a game enjoyable.

I've been looking forward to SSI developing real time simulators for some time, so it was with great anticipation that I installed the game and read the comprehensive manual.

Still excited, I fired up the game to find that I could slip into any one of 24 tanks from WWII including the venerable German Tiger I and II and Panther, the Russian T34, the



US Sherman and British Cromwell. Quite impressive! I also found that there are 3 German and 3 Russian campaigns ranging from 1939 and to 1945, and 12 stand-alone scenarios for UK, US, German and Russian tankers.

Into the game I went, following the tutorials, moving to the scenarios and into the cam-



paigns. By this time I was quite deflated! All I can say is that the publisher has put tremendous effort into modelling each of the tanks; they look gorgeous! The tracks and suspension bounce realistically, you can get seasick buttoned up inside because the feeling of motion is the best I've experienced. The ground! Wow, does it present a challenge! You can really get hull-down in the wadis of North Africa, and the sound of the engine, turret, and gun movements is great. But gosh, the gameplay is woeful!

Mission briefings lack detail, enemy AI is scripted, there are no enemy infantry except in pill-boxes, no Panzerfausts; it's just

you and your three tanks against an armoured enemy and some enemy vehicles that drive around wildly! Nothing at all representative of WWII action. Explosive effects are pitiful, trees and other objects are sparse, and you can't see

more than 800m, even though the Tiger's gun can engage out to around 2500m! Your own drivers' AI is flawed and allows them to bump into anything and get stuck there! A mission editor is provided, but it is poor.

Maj. Ian Lindgren



Tanks are fun to take out for a paddock-bash, it's a pity that the gameplay is so woeful

Hexen II Mission Pack: Portal of Praevus

Expansion packs - love them or loathe them, they are here to stay. Some add so much to the original they are almost a totally new game. Others feature a new weapon, an enemy or two and some slapped together levels. Well, Portal of Praevus fits squarely into the latter category, but that's not to say it isn't a good mission pack.

The story line is actually quite good and continues the tale of the three Serpent Riders. This time, a new foe called Praevus has arisen who wants to possess the souls of the serpent riders to become powerful enough to rule all of Thyrion. So, the four heroes, the Paladin, the Crusader, the Necromancer and the Assassin are sent on a new quest to defeat Praevus. The Demoness once served Eidolon, one of the serpent riders that Praevus is attempting to possess, so she is out to destroy Praevus to let her master rest in peace.

Some people will like the new Demoness class. She's damn fast, and all her weapons are missile weapons, although the

first three are very weak when compared to the other characters' weapons. The visual effects of the weapons look great, in particular the Firestorm, which is your basic medieval flame-thrower.

The new enemies (all four of them) are



nothing to rant about but will add some variety if you've played Hexen II to death.

There are fifteen new levels to explore in the mission pack, but no new deathmatch levels which is a real shame as the single player maps do not multiplayer well at all. They are way too big

and even with eight players you have difficulty finding anyone else. Those who were frustrated with the infuriating puzzles of the original will be pleased with a simple yet clever touch - when you activate a switch that opens something in a different part of the level, a

little cut scene jumps in to show you what you've done.

Portal of Praevus will appeal more to the single-player Hexen II lover than anything else, so if you loved the fantasy atmosphere of Hexen II, you'll get right into this mission pack.

George Argy

CATEGORY 1st person action

PLAYERS 1-TBA

PUBLISHER Activision

PRICE \$TBA

RATING MA15+

AVAILABLE Now

NEED P90, 16MB RAM, Win95, 2x CD-ROM, 45MB HDD, Original Hexen II

WANT P166, 32MB RAM, Win95, 8x CD-ROM, Sound card, OpenGL 3D card

overall

78%

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EVOLUTION

Discovery Channel Multimedia • Category: Lizard Mutation Sim • Players: 1-5 • Need: P60, 2x CD-ROM, 16 Megs RAM, Win95, SVGA graphics card, Mouse, 15 Megs disk space • Want: P166 MMX, 8x CD-ROM, 32 Megs RAM, 50 Megs disk space

First to build the Elephant-Man wins!

Evolution is a game built around the premise of developing a species to the lofty goal of intelligent life, before your competition does. It's a multi-playable game of lizard feeding and developmental dominance, in an RTS style.

Time Flies

Between 2000 and 8000 years flick by in every realtime second that elapses. Generations flutter and pop, eons disappear like fleeting coffee breaks. This makes sudden environmental changes that enable players to quickly turn their hairy mammoths into modern day Sasquatch.

Every five minutes or so, the geology and climate are updated, changing the feeding areas and landmasses with influential effects like continental drift and natural disasters such as comets and nearby Supernova.

RTS Dinosaurs

The creatures in Evolution have been intentionally made stupid. This is evidently a way of giving the player something to do while their world takes shape. This will make players of games with advanced AI like Red Alert cringe, as the most intelligent of AI systems seem incomprehensibly mindless at the best of times.

Well, as you move your lizard colonies about to better feeding grounds, keeping



each one apart, they misbehave and roam belligerently, impinging on their brother's food zones and generally causing hell amongst the team. As the feeding of your dopey mutts is the key to power in the game, it's bloody annoying when they start messing with each other and causing starvation of their mates. Especially when they reproduce, and suddenly there's a new colony on the loose, trampling all over the allied chow zones until you can zoom in on it and point it in the right direction, also making sure it gets there and stays put.

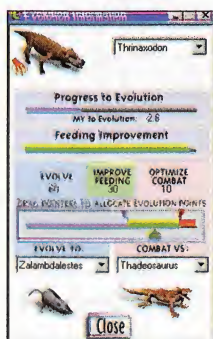
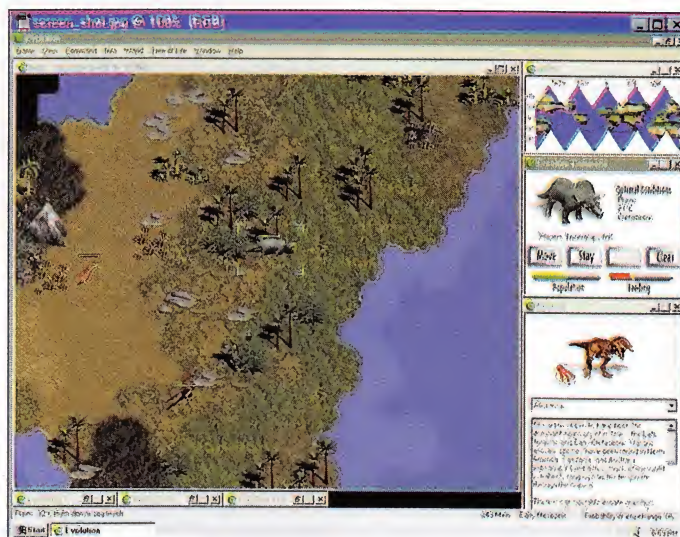
Evolution's Greatest Hits

You don't have a completely open path to follow, based on environmental development. Instead, you have a compilation of the animals that hold the most evolutionary significance, the ones people are familiar with, or those that simply look good as a bitmap.

This is apparently a technological constraint. It would have been neat to have dynamic 3D skeletons and limbs sprouting to fit environment pressures. But no, it's the top forty or so, which you will probably be familiar with. No giant flying jellyfish on dense-atmosphere planet type scenarios for you!

Darwin Barrel Rolling Underground

In reality, each species has only a single, definite train of ancestors. In the game, the higher



species can have any one of a range of ancestors! This prevents the player from reaching evolutionary brick walls and insulates them from fairly instant extinction. In this way a Mink Rat can probably evolve into a Blue Whale, which is absolutely

fine by all the scientists out there.

This is because catastrophic amounts of the biomass on Earth kicks the bucket every time the climate changes dramatically, between periods like the Jurassic, Cretaceous, etc. It would be pretty much instant game over when you reached these junctions, unless you had picked the particular hamsters or whichever creature was perfectly suited to survive.

Evolution has a Tree of Life, as seen in the poster that comes in the box. Winning involves controlling the key creatures in the game, as in evolving them first as your evolutionary opponents can't evolve the creatures you have claimed and already produced. In this way, it's conceivable that an unfortunate player could be Tyrannosaurus-

Let's wallow in this mud pit for 300,000 years... (actual game time: 22 seconds)

Rushed. Hmmm, scary thought! And you would have no Tyrannosaurii of your own to retaliate with. You will have to hope that your 2 kilogram egg-eating Comptosagnuses can hold them off.

Stick it up your Art

This game was described by one of the developers as "a work of art". This makes me think of Pro Hart shooting a fridge with a meat-pie gun in some elegant European gallery. A mundane, blathering, confused attempt at intellectual elitism counts as Art? We don't think so.

Unfortunately, Evolution can't hold its wobbly shape next to relatively concrete titles like Sim Earth, or Civilisation. Its painfully slow pace, demented AI and dull graphics do little to excite or hold interest.

However, if you're a dinosaur buff or something and are turned on by the concept of directing a squad of Allosaurus against a hapless enemy player's Diplodocus, then Evolution may be just the thing for you.

Hendry Saunders

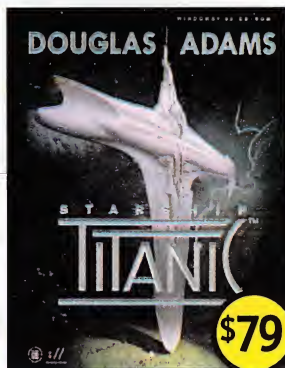


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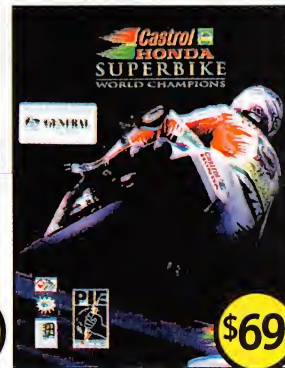
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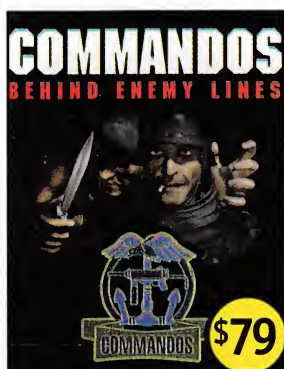
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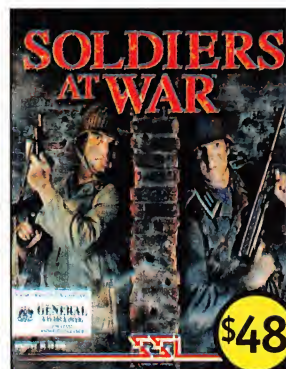
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FORSAKEN PLAYGUIDE



Get past the tough bits, kill all the bosses, find all the secrets and gain access to the Secret Level! Try all that without the PowerPlay Forsaken Playguide...

Volcano

A relatively easy and linear level to begin with and one that introduces you to most of the enemies you'll find later on, except in smaller doses. There are heaps of pylons and doorways to hide behind, so practice those strafing skills early.

As you fly out, two enemies will fly out from the funnels in the room in front of you. Kill them and grab the gold bars in the funnels they came from. Keep flying ahead, destroy three tanks and various gun turrets. If you've picked up Solaris missiles, use them against the Levitanks (the meanies that fire lightning bolts at you). Fire a Solaris and then duck behind a pylon or doorway. Do not take these suckers on head-first or they'll fry you. Pretty easy going, as long as you don't take a lava swim.

When you go down the elevator shaft, avoid shooting the panels that emanate green light. If you do this, you'll get a Titan missile from a secret room in the next chamber. Watch out for the wind tunnels at the end - you can't stop and they could blow you into a mine or flame. Go slow, shoot the mines with the Suss-Gun and time your progress to avoid the flames.

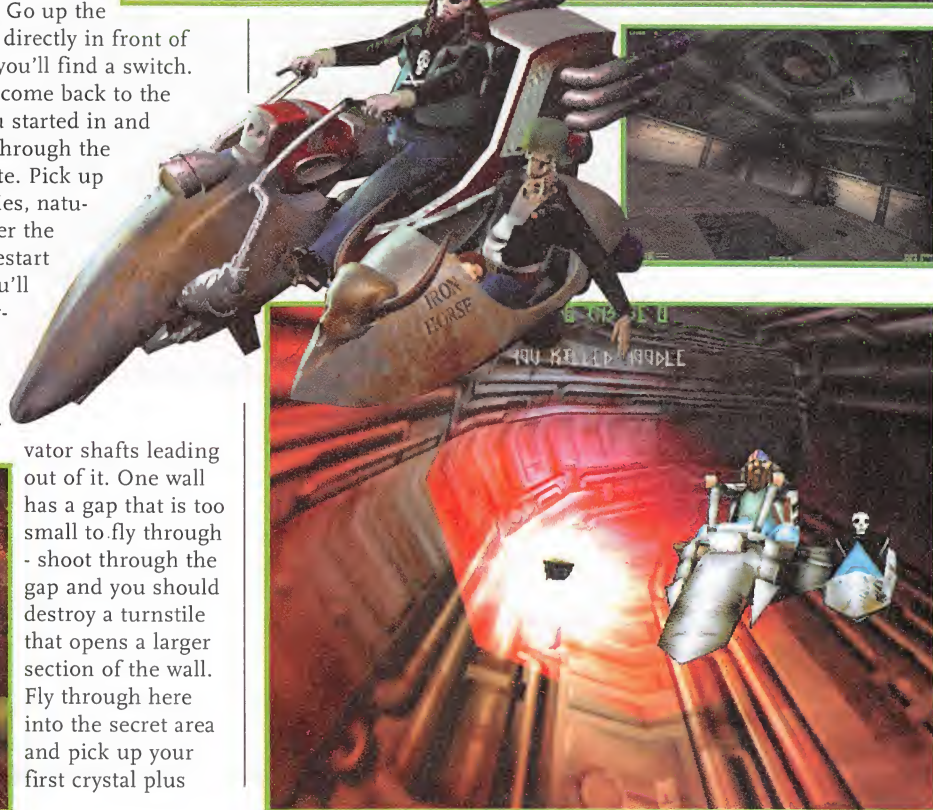
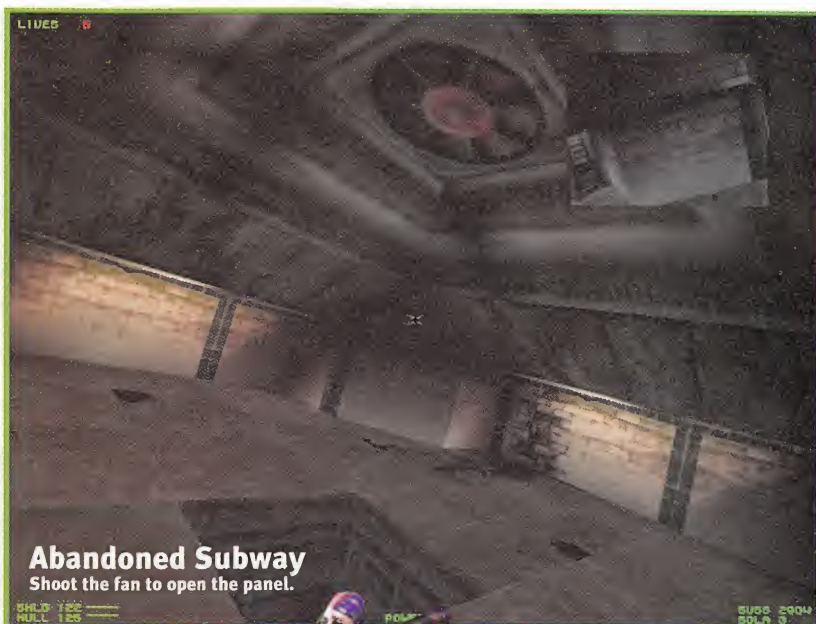


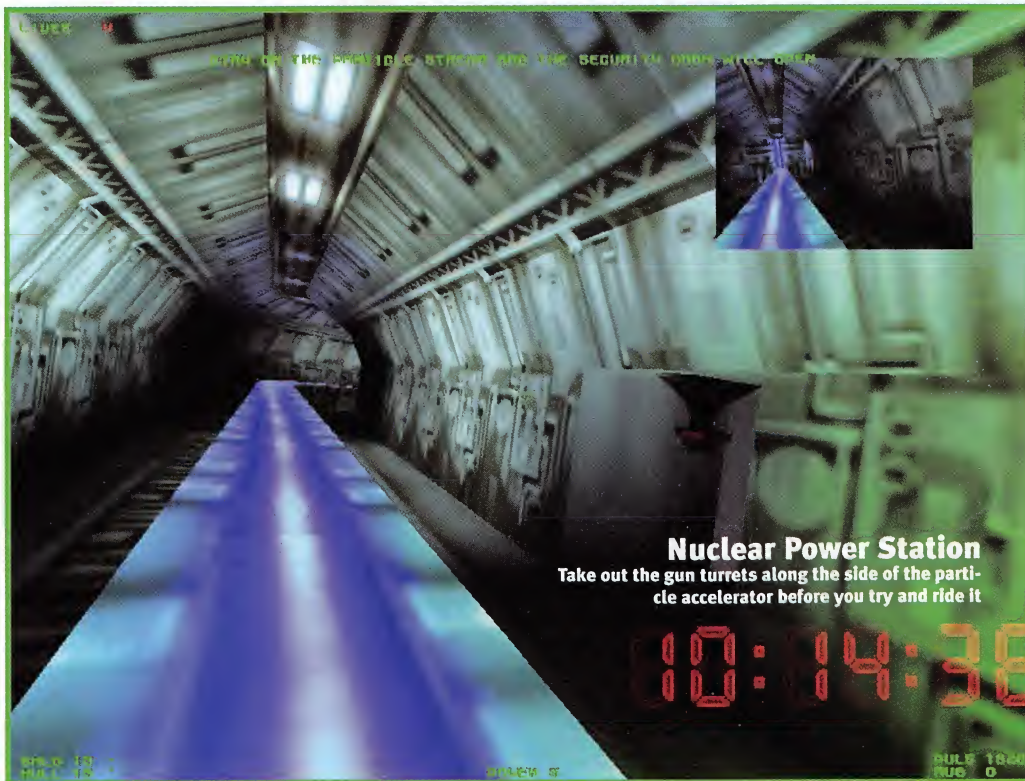
Abandoned Subway

A few twists and turns in this level, but nothing particularly challenging. In general, ground units are more powerful than aerial ones, so take them out first. Keep your rear view mirror on at all times and always check your six.

You should see your first free life on this level after you collect ten gold bars. There is a grate on the floor in front of you as soon as you start the level. Go up the escalator directly in front of you and you'll find a switch. Shoot it, come back to the room you started in and go back through the open grate. Pick up the goodies, naturally. After the second restart point, you'll find yourself in a room with three ele-

vator shafts leading out of it. One wall has a gap that is too small to fly through - shoot through the gap and you should destroy a turnstile that opens a larger section of the wall. Fly through here into the secret area and pick up your first crystal plus





some other fun stuff. Near the end of the level you'll encounter your first rival bounty hunter, Cerbero. If you're really skilled you should be able to use the Trojax you've found in combination with Solaris missiles to take him out fairly quickly.

Nuclear Power Station

Keep your eye on the timer - this is one level where you may find yourself running out of time as it can get pretty confusing at times. And if the timer runs out and you haven't completed the objective, it's game over, man!

Destroy the Snub Turret immediately in front of you and collect the Golden Power Pod it drops. Shoot the large metal doors on your left to gain access. After you open the door at the top of this shaft, you'll be sucked into an air duct. Face forwards and shoot constantly as you

descend - the aim is to destroy the fan before it turns you into sushi. If you do this successfully, fly around behind the other two ducts and destroy the fans from behind. Be careful though, as a Pine Mine will appear in each duct after you destroy the fans. You'll also meet another bounty hunter, Nubia, in this level. She appears in the room with four entrances. Her primary weapon is the Trojax, so time her shots and simply strafe to avoid them. Pump her full of Solaris and an automatic weapon like the Suss-Gun and you should have little trouble.

The particle accelerator later on can be very tricky - you have to stay on it all the way for the security door to open. It's almost impossible to do while the turrets are firing at you, so take them out first. When the area is clear, fly along the main rail and the security door should open. You should have some spare nitro at the end - use it to make good your escape in case you have but seconds remaining.

Thermal Power Station

Try to conserve as much ammo as possible - bump doors and switches first instead of shooting them, and learn how many shots it takes to destroy an enemy and train yourself to only use just enough instead of going maximum overkill. These rules do not apply to death-match, of course :)

Another tough level with plenty of enemies to keep you occupied, and more constantly respawn if you find them too easy. The level is fairly linear though, so you shouldn't get lost. This level has ten gold bars, so search high and low to find them and gain yourself an extra life. There's no timer on this one, so take your time. To destroy the engine near the end of the level, you will need to shoot the four panels that say 'Back-Up'. A door will open that you can go through - just avoid the flames. The next room that opens up will offer up two keys. As you grab the second one, Rex Hardy will



appear. He also favours the Trojax, so keep at him with automatic fire and some missiles.

Fedbank

These levels just don't get easier. It seems every room is full of enemies, and every time you destroy one another spawns to take its place. Rightly so, when you consider the amount of gold to be found in a Federal Bank vault!

Watch out for the falling debris in the room where the flames are! One of these cement blocks can kill you instantly, so proceed with caution. Find the safe key. In the safe is the vault key. Go through the vault doors. After you go through the vault, there is a dark tunnel heading down. Shoot off some pulsar rounds as you head down and you should see a small hidden passageway. Go inside this secret area to pick up a crystal and a bar of gold. Keep heading down until you find the big keypad. The combo is 519; use it and destroy everything in your path.

You'll need to destroy Nutta in a small room with no real place to hide. Terminate with extreme prejudice and avoid the Trojax. Move through the wall into a room with six gold bars. A gas trap will activate as soon as



you go in - just grab all the gold and a wall will explode (keep your distance). Go through this to end the level.

Prison Ship

One of my fave levels, this one will keep you occupied for some time. It's a tough level to navigate, and may be confusing for some. Just try to remember that the writing on the walls will tell you which way is up.

You have to collect all the DNA on the upper floors, then collect the DNA from the lower floors and prison decks. Nothing particularly complex, just shoot

every button you see and destroy every box you see as they usually contain power-ups. In the right crew room, shoot the panel on the underside of the room's platform for a hidden Resnic Re-animator.

The Crystal chamber should keep you amused and test your wits. In case you have no wits to speak of, here's how you do it: shoot the Green ceiling light with a Pulsar, shoot the Red ceiling light with a Suss Gun, shoot the Yellow ceiling light with a Mug missile, and use a Trojax on the Blue light to get the Crystal. Easy, huh? The last DNA canister is in the Exercise Deck. The door will lock behind you so make sure you've picked up all twenty DNA samples before you enter this room. The Ex-Cop will appear after you pick up the DNA sample and will try to take you out with his Pulsars. Blast him with something big and keep strafing as there's nothing to hide behind in this room. Follow the light after you destroy him to the exit.

Asteroid Base

Kill the Mek-Ton at the beginning of this level and you should bag a Trojax. Kill the hunters that appear and head for the cargo bay. The switch in this room can only be activated by your newly acquired Trojax. Try and destroy the enemies you see in the order they appear. If you succeed, you'll get access to a secret area. You get to say a big hello to your first boss on this level, the Flesh Morph. This fella has three modes of attack: homing missiles, bouncing balls of fire and homing tentacles.

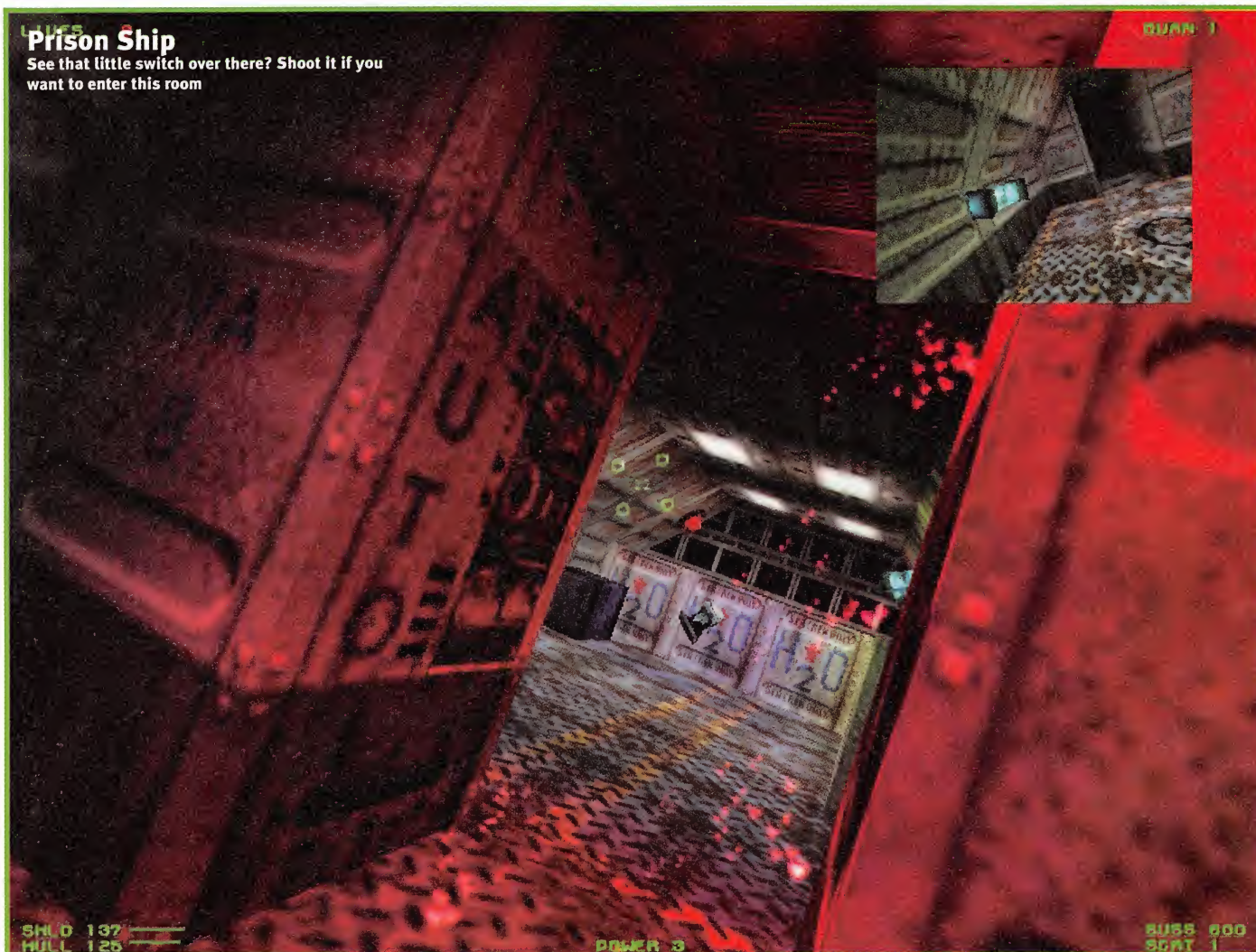
You'll need to aim for the yellow bit on his gut with your Trojax to take him out, but make sure you've charged the shots a bit before you let rip for





Prison Ship

See that little switch over there? Shoot it if you want to enter this room

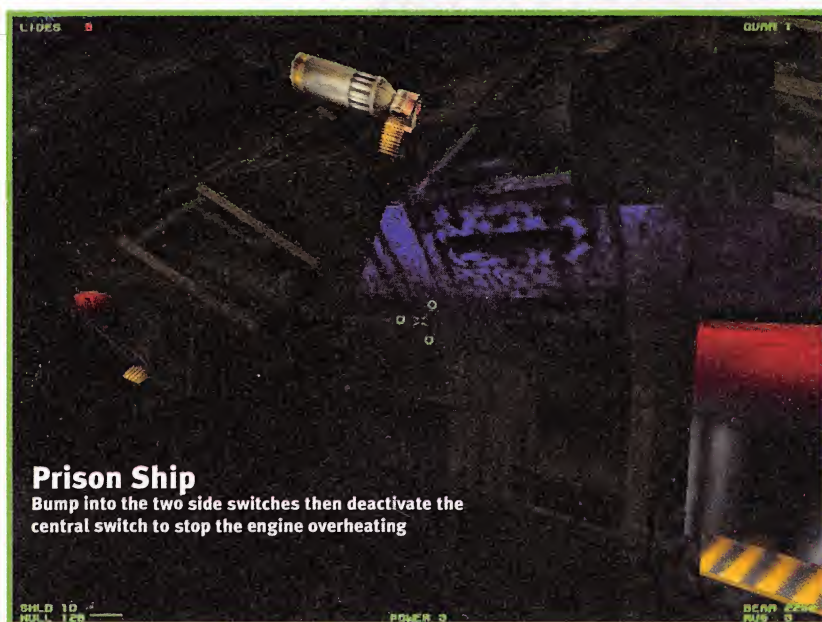


LIVES 8

QUANT 1

Prison Ship

Bump into the two side switches then deactivate the central switch to stop the engine overheating



Bio-Sphere

A tough level that'll have you battling numerous foes, another bounty hunter and a big mofo boss to boot.

As soon as you start, shoot the vent to your left and you get yourself a secret room all to yourself. Grab the powerpod and gold bar in that order and destroy the Hunter and Turret as they spawn. There are a couple of mine layers wandering around - take them out with your pulsar if you can, but don't chase them as they

Fly into the room that the shaft leads into, turn around as the enemies spawn and drop the Quantum as you back out the way you came in. The enemies should set off the mine, clearing the room for you. Later on, you will find yourself heading down a moss-covered corridor with a Hunter in the middle. Take him out and head into a room. There is a hole in the ceiling that contains a secret teleporter that takes you into a dome filled with sweet, sweet gold. Grab it and be happy. Take out Beard, but save ammo for the spawnfest that is about to occur. Don't stop firing as the enemies appear around

maximum effect. Keep strafing around him to avoid his fire.

There's a crystal on this level, too. You can see it from the bridge towards the end of the

level. After you hit the switch that de-activates a force field, come back to this area, shoot the turret and the nastie, grab the crystal and head out.

can lead you into a room full of enemies. Head past the laser force field down the shaft, collecting a Quantum Mine on your way down.





Asteroid Base

Shoot the flower to activate the teleporter

you; they will make your life difficult if you don't take them out as they appear.

After you take them all out, you will be rewarded for your efforts with a Crystal. After the laboratory you'll find yourself heading down a red lit corridor leading into four blue pillars. Shoot the power unit to your right, then shoot the Suppressor in the room to nab yourself a Multiple Fire Rocket Launcher. Save this for your encounter with the Exogenon. When you meet this dude, start hitting him with your biggest weapons in combo attacks (primary/secondary simultaneously). He drops down at random through holes in the ceiling, fires homing missiles, then goes back up to charge his primary weapon. Use the pillars to avoid the homing missiles and his primary weapon and you should be fine.

Subterranean Complex

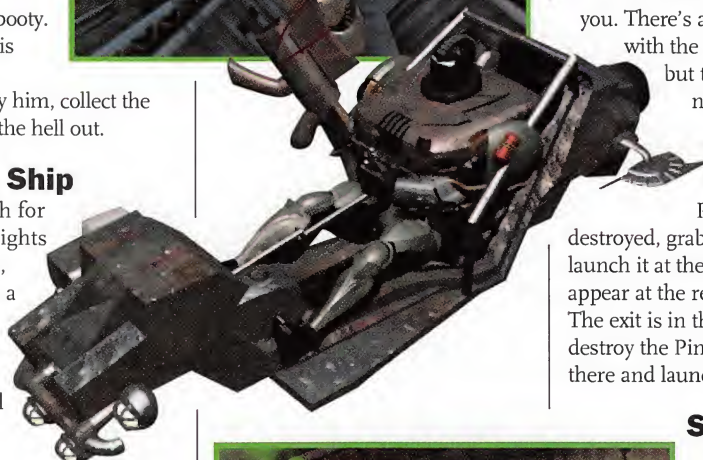
You start well below the bottom of the planet and your objective is to make it to the rooms at the top. To do this you'll need to trigger a number of switches throughout the level that will result in the large doors at the top opening up. This level includes a number of secrets that can be triggered by shooting texture animations, steam, flickering lights and anything else that

looks suspicious. Shoot first, ask questions later, but you only need to use your Pulsar to conserve ammo. There is a secret in the blue-coloured security room near the start of the level. Shoot the flickering light and grab the secret booty. At the end of this level you'll face Foetoid - destroy him, collect the Crystal and get the hell out.

Capsized Ship

Again, watch for any flickering lights as, chances are, they will reveal a secret.

There's a crystal in this level that you'll be able to see but not reach immediately. Find your way to the ship's galley. Opposite the exit on the floor there is a secret room that can be opened by shooting it. A crazy spawnfest of enemies ensues, so be prepared. Take them out and hit the switch in the room. This turns off the propeller and allows you access into the room with the Crystal. You'll



face a boss in this level called Big Geek. Shoot his tender stomach with as much firepower as you can muster. He will split in two and become Little Geek. Destroy Little Geek's head and the locked door will open.

The easiest way to defeat the Bounty Hunter at the end of the level is by laying Pine Mines as he appears, and let them help you do the dirty work.

Orbital Station

In some rooms containing switches, a Pine Mine will spawn in the doorway, so don't hang around doors shooting switches and be ready when the mine appears - try circle-strafing around it to avoid its fire while shooting at it from a distance. There is a switch in the room behind the security door. Activate it and grab yourself another Crystal from the container.

When you reach the water, kill all enemies around it before going under, as you are much less mobile when submerged and it is difficult to avoid the Snub Turret fire. You'll want your exit path back to the teleporters to be clear, so lay Pine Mines at the entrance to each and they'll do the job for you. There's a Titan in the room with the docking arm doors,

but to get to it you'll need to use some heavy firepower. Keep shooting at the box with your Pulsar until it's

destroyed, grab the Titan and launch it at the three turrets that appear at the rear of the Shuttle. The exit is in the cockpit so destroy the Pine Mine you find there and launch ass outta there.

Shuttle Bay

Another challenging mission that will test your skill with the steel, if you know what I mean.

Fly back up to the top of the control room and locate the small black box on top of one of the panels. Shoot it until it





starts sparking. Look down and you'll see a protective case around the large screen slide open to reveal a Chaos Shield and a couple of Pine Mines. You'll face another boss on this level, the Meta Tank. Keep shooting at his gun turrets to take him out. Towards the end you'll find a tunnel with a pulsing cylinder of light within. Fly into the middle of the light and shoot the panel above or below you and it will open, earning you another secret.

Military Base

This level finds you doing something a little more intellectually challenging than smiting all foes before you.

You need to find the five bomb components before you can exit. The bomb parts are in the rooms labelled Window 01, Shield 01, Track C 01, Control D 01, and ORBN 01. There are also four security doors you'll need to find the switches for in the level. To make your job easier, I'll tell you where they are: The door in B01 is

opened by a switch in OBS 01. The door D01 is opened by the switch in Window 01. The door in Main Tun 01 is opened by the switch in Dome A 01. Finally, the door in Lift E01 is opened by the switch in Silo B 01. Shoot all the barrels in the room at the base of the elevator shaft and collect all the goodies therein. Shoot the control box on the wall to animate the forklift truck. Shoot all of the vents in the next room to get yourself a Resnic Re-animator. The laser field in Window 01 is deactivated by shooting the computer terminal you can see inside the room. There's also another Bounty Hunter that you'll encounter on your way to the dome. You may not see him at first as the area is dark, but stay alert and let rip when he announces his presence.

Tloloc Temple

This is the last normal level in the game. Don't enter the water straight away, but position yourself halfway down the well shaft and avoid the laser.

You'll see two cobra head paintings facing each other - shoot the left one, then the right one and they will face away from each other, de-activating the

lasers. You now have one minute to collect the Golden Idol before the laser comes back on, and you will need the Idol to complete the level so get to it! After you grab it, get back to the first well shaft and enter the door a third of the way down. Shoot the turrets from left to right because when you destroy the last one, a spawnfest ensues and you don't want those pesky turrets around making your job harder.

Before you enter the Crystal room, drop a Pine Mine or two in the entrance. These will cover your rear, if you get my drift, and help you take out the enemies as they respawn on your way back out. To get access to the Crystal you'll need to shoot the four valves giving off steam.

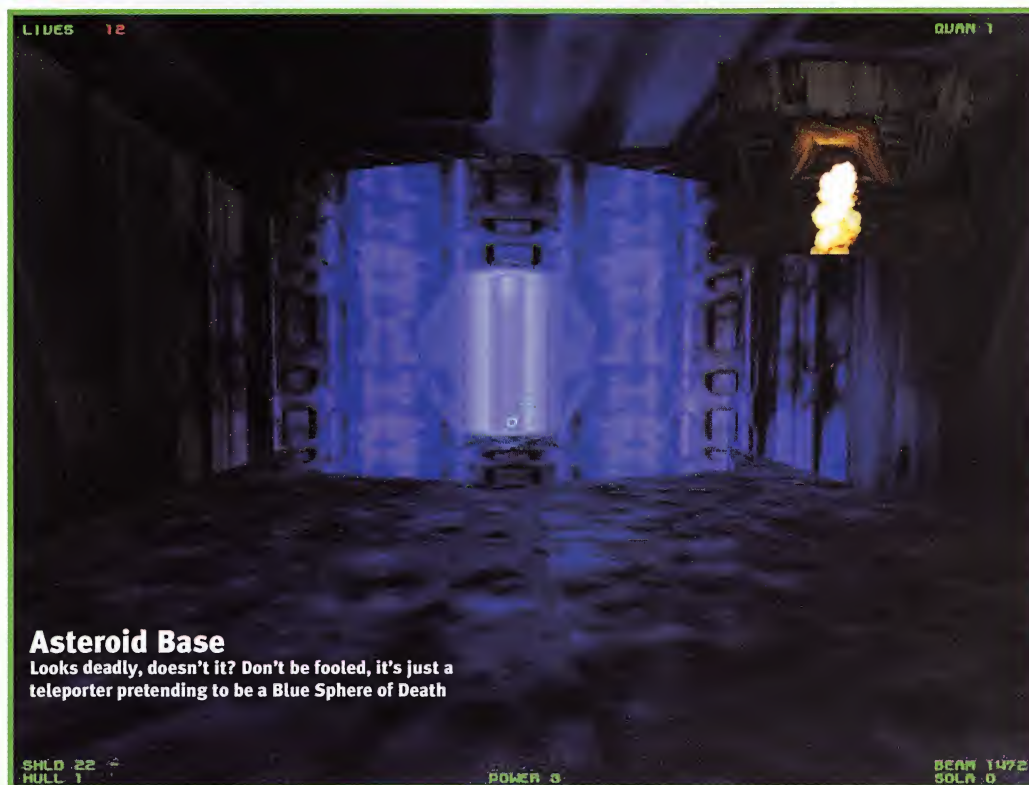
The final boss is the Avatar, and you'll need everything you've got to take him out. Try and get above or below him so his missiles don't hit you. There's no point in saving that ammo for a rainy day, so let rip with your biggest weaponry first. Kill him and rejoice, in that order.

Secret Level: Ancient Temple

If you find all the crystals in the game (and you should do after you read this playguide), you'll get access to this secret level.

If you find the Crystal on this level you'll get the secret Biker, Fly-Girl. The pool you see before you as you start the level replenishes your shields to full strength five times during the level. Use it at the start of the level, and the four other times it is active, and it will generate a Crystal in the Crystal room. Find the amphitheatre and shoot both snake heads you'll find in there. Then head to the Pit of Fear, where you should find a switch below the ledge. Trigger it to turn off the wind in the amphitheatre. When you get to the Crystal room, keep moving to avoid enemy fire and watch out for the winds. Blast all enemies as they appear but conserve ammo as they get progressively harder. Kill them all and you've finished the game! There, now that wasn't so hard, was it?

George Argy



Asteroid Base

Looks deadly, doesn't it? Don't be fooled, it's just a teleporter pretending to be a Blue Sphere of Death

SHLD 22
HULL 1

POWER 3

BEAM 1472
SOLA 0

TIPS & TACTICS

Special secrets for a deeper gaming experience



police chopper will smash into a mountain. Move between the roadblock and Bauxile Road several times until they all crash. You'll probably need to take out a couple on your own as well. When enough have died (about five), a message that the roadblock has been removed will come through on the CB.

MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2

***** Unless you're looking for trouble, don't get caught in the pack when going into a corner. Instead, back off and wait for an opportunity where you can pass and slot back in clean, racing door-to-door for position ends up leaving you worse for wear.

***** Floor it only on big, wide straights. Otherwise, go three-quarters throttle and maybe even keep it in second gear, particularly in hilly or tight-traffic conditions. Nothing will ruin your day and send you back to Losersville like a 360 or a flip.

GRAND THEFT AUTO

***** If you have a large amount of cops after you and you are in a car, park the driver's door against a building and stop. The cops will stop and jump out to bust you, but won't be able to because they can't reach your door. Now just run them over when they step in front or behind the car and once they are all dead make your get away or steal one of the many empty cop cars. Your driver's door must be pretty close to the building.

***** Go to north-west Hackenslash in Liberty City level one. On the map above the police station there are four small staggered buildings. Walk up to the front door of the top building and you will be sucked underground where you will be able to walk around under the roads and buildings. If you are wanted by the cops, then they will follow you around above ground, but won't be able to bust you. It is also possible to take a bike underground.

***** Shoot at a policeman right when he is coming out of his car. He will return to the car and never come out.

***** When you go to one of the secret mission cars in Liberty City, unless it specifically says otherwise, you don't need to use that car. If it's a slow car, and there's a fast one nearby, you can just hop out of the mission car after getting the mission and climb into another car. If you need to use the mission car, it will tell you to get back in.

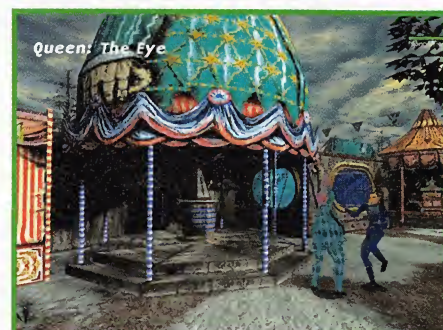
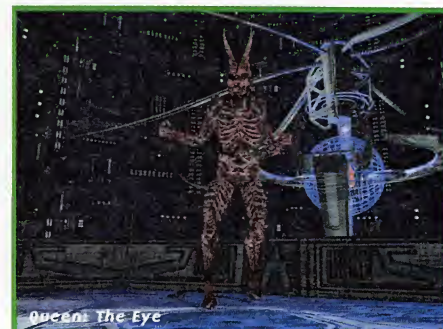


INTERSTATE 76

***** Oil slicks work great during races (when your primary goal is simply to win). As soon as you get ahead of your opponents, lay down enough oil to make Exxon jealous.

***** When travelling down Oil Well Road to rescue Skeeter, ignore the enemy cars and keep driving. You won't have time to fight them. Just race around the curves, smash through the construction warnings, and yes, you will have to jump over the unfinished bridge. Going full speed should do it, but if you get a slow start, a little nitrous oxide will do the trick.

***** The police roadblock is an especially difficult scene to finish. You need to kill enough of the crooked cops for them to become scared and remove the west roadblock. The best way to do this is to turn around and lead them down Bauxile Road. If you're lucky, the cops will fall into chasms while chasing you. If you're really lucky, the



QUEEN: THE EYE

The Arena Domain:

***** Avoid combat with guards and troopers whenever possible. They will only drain your energy.

***** You need both the key held by Tycho and the key in the blade corridor to complete the level. You will not be able to ascend the spike without both keys.



World Cup 98

- ★ Watcher keys (lodestones) are locked in cages that will only open once the watcher has been defeated. If you try to collect the lodestone before the cage has opened, Dubroc will be electrocuted.

The Works Domain:

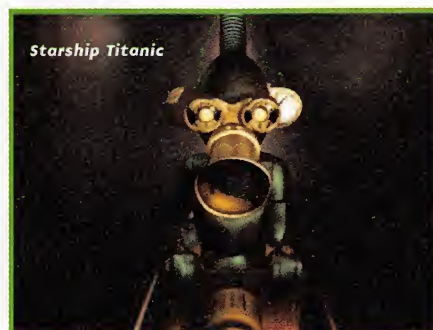
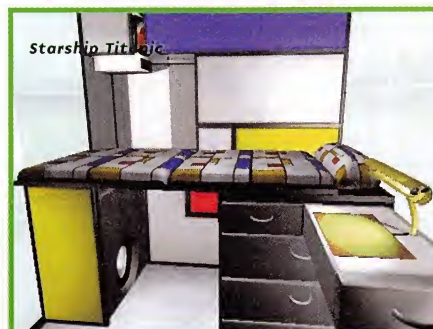
- ★ The water in the plaza and sewer is lethal, so don't fall into it. However, it can be used as an offensive weapon against the thugs, so force them into it.
- ★ The astrolabe puzzle won't work until you have broken the plaque and placed the moonstone on the plinth.

The Theatre Domain:

- ★ Do not enter the dressing room adjoining the right wing of the auditorium until you have collected the prism from the other dressing room.
- ★ Only the eagle's talon can harm the Snakeman. There is a small area close to the Snakeman's basket in the right-hand dressing room where Mestopholies' magic cannot touch you.
- ★ If the zombie holding the juggling club falls off the fly-floor, the juggling club will appear on the stage floor.

The Innuendo Domain:

- ★ You can get information on items by showing them to Magritte and Kazan.
- ★ Don't try to pick up the cockroach before you have solved the puzzle; it will squirt acid over you.
- ★ If you try to extract the thorn sword from Humungo's foot before you gain his trust, he will kick you.



- ★ The trick to winning the throwing balls on the archery stall is to follow the order of the clown heads.
- ★ In the corn circle, listen carefully to Kazan's first speech as it indicates the order which the keys must be placed in. If you get the key order wrong several times, the iron maiden will shut on Kazan, the Eye will win, and all the domains will be under his power.

The Final Domain:

- ★ You will need to trigger proximity mines in order to collect certain objects and access puzzles.
- ★ The insulated pole is the only weapon that can hurt the homing droid and the electrical drone.

- ★ The switch in the teleporter maze changes the destination of one of the teleporters so you can reach the health pack near the beginning.
- ★ When in the dome, remember the tactics you employed for defeating the other incarnations of Death. In this domain, they will be tougher.

STARSHIP TITANIC

- ★ To get upgraded to second class, you must arrange your room so that you can lie in your bed and watch TV.
- ★ Grab the liftbot's head from the bottom of the well and go to elevator four to fix it. You'll get Titania's eye in exchange.
- ★ To get upgraded to first class, you need to adjust the settings in the sculpture room so that the deskbot is in a good mood. To improve all of the robot's settings, simply go to each statue and play with the levers so that the dials (in the lower left of the screen) are yellow instead of red.
- ★ Take note of the room marker you see on the TV. It's upside down. Use your PET to re-create the marker (by Shift-Clicking). You will need to go to that room and touch the lights.
- ★ Use the perch (from the parrot lobby) to get the hammer (on the Promenade). Use the hammer to get the long stick (from the relaxation room on third class floors). Use the long stick to get a lemon from the arboretum.

WORLD CUP 98

- ★ Your chances of winning a contest are greatly enhanced if you maintain a good share of ball possession and take lots of shots at the goal. Shoot when you can and do a lot of seemingly unproductive back passing to keep those stats high.
- ★ If you're playing well with lots of shots and possession but find yourself down on the scoreboard, keep at it - things should eventually go your way.
- ★ A number of games can be won late in the second half when the defense finally succumbs to the pressure.
- ★ Late crosses from deep in the corner tend to find unmarked players in front of the net. Don't be afraid to go in almost to the dead ball line before passing for a one-touch shot.
- ★ If you're going to slide tackle, do it head-on or your chances of getting carded rise dramatically. Otherwise, go with a less vicious tackle and keep your men on the pitch.

ORACLE

There really is someone who knows everything!

If you're in a game and really stuck, you've tried and tried but have had no luck. There's only one man to turn to - The Oracle, of course, for he knows all of it, even though he can't rhyme for...

Write to Oracle at:

ORACLE
PC POWERPLAY
78 RENWICK ST.
REDFERN
NSW 2016
SETUP@PCPOWERPLAY.NEXT.COM.AU

ABE'S ODDYSEE

? I finished Oddworld but I didn't save all 100 Mudokans. Is it true that you miss out on some cutscenes and how do I save all 100 workers, there's no way you can find all Mudokans!

Jimmy Hayes
Hobart, Tas

***** Mudokans Shmudokans, don't waste your time starting all over. Nobody's perfect and besides, there's a cool cheat that lets you view all cut scenes and choose different levels. Use these codes on the main menu. To view all of the movie scenes: Hold the shift key and using the arrow keys, press: up, left, right, left, right, left, right, down. To select any level: Hold the shift key and press down, right, left, right, left, right, left, up. Have fun cheating—err gaming.

ARRIVAL

? I'm really, really stuck with The Arrival. I'm at the stage where you use the green key on the robot which in turn reveals the puzzle. Any ideas on how to bypass it? It's got me stumped...

Barry Thompson
Blacktown, NSW

***** Yeah, you sure are stuck with it. Ok, here's the answer to the power supply puzzle:

1-1 1-5 5-5
 3-1 1-4 4-5
 1-2 2-5 5-3
 4-3 3-3 3-2
 4-4 4-2 2-2

See, not so hard now is it...

BLACK DAHLIA

? Can you please help me on Black Dahlia? Please? I am very stuck at the start, I need some hints. I have found 5 places so far: My office, Sullivan's office, police station, McGinties Bar and that other guy's

office. I have also found the black list, and a bag of runes with some papers, after all of these I can't go to a different place. Also in the game manual it says there is a revolver in a desk drawer but I can't find it!

Thuy Thi Geni Nguyen
Internet

***** Hmm, some detective you turned out to be. Here's a few pointers to get you started. Ok, you start in your office. Just search and examine everything you can. In the drawer behind the notebook is a gun (drag the notebook away to see it). You can also find a key in the gun, which in turn opens the cabinet door in the bookcase. Also, turn the lights on and search the chandelier, and you'll find a bag of runes and some notes. Now go to your boss, Mr. Sullivan and talk to him about your case, and then about your predecessor. Visit detective Merylo at the police station and ask him about torso killings first, and then tell him about your case. Look at the mug shot book at his desk and find Louis Fischer with his aliases.

Inside is also a piece of paper with Finster's address and phone number. Go to McGinty's bar and talk to the barman. Find Winslow near the exit door to find out about a list of suspicious Americans. Return to your boss and ask him about the list. Use Pensky's notes, Finster's phone number and the list to unlock Dr Strauss's encrypted phone number, which is 267-404. That should get you started. The rest is up to you Sherlock.

BLADE RUNNER

? Ok, I killed the cook that I scared off in China Town but now what? Know of any tips o' wise one?

Nick Foukas
San Souci, NSW

***** Did you search the body? If so, go to the dumpster and get the licence tag. Proceed to your apartment and feed your dog, check for messages, and turn on the TV. Get some sleep and you will enter a dream sequence involving a big fat guy (the one resembling your real life neighbour). When you awake, you get a message about Tyrell. Now, act 2 should begin.





Blade Runner



Starship Titanic

obvious easter egg. The next best one is to try and pick up the seawater at the Blood Island Beach about 26 times. Guybrush will eventually go into the water for a nice surprise. Another surprise you'll enjoy is trying to get Guybrush to "pick-up" the Bartender.

SANITARIUM



How do you get into the mausoleum in chapter 7? I have the eye and a book of matches and have looked at the tombstone with the writing on it.

Helen Valissa
Melbourne, VIC



Hmm, let's see... if you have the glass eye you've already turned on the incinerator, right? Man, I'm losing it. I assume that when you say you've looked at the tombstone you mean that you've read the message off of it. From here, you need to go back to the morgue. If you haven't yet hooked up the U-joint to the pipes do so now. Open the number 7 door in the morgue. If you position the mouse cursor toward the back of the cadaver locker, it will let you investigate. Max will hop up on the little slide out table and say something about some scratches. You will then see a blow up display showing the scratches, but you won't be able to do anything. Right click the mouse to exit the puzzle. Max will stay on the table and say something like "now what?". Use the glass eye on the back of the cadaver locker to decipher the scratches. That should put you back on track.

STARSHIP TITANIC



This game is getting to me... I'm stuck in 2nd Class where the broken elevator is. I don't know what to do from here.

Simon
Internet

Relax, it's just a game. Head to the bottom of the Well, and collect the LiftBot head. Find a TV, and check channel 5. Note the floor displayed on the screen, and head to the elevators. You'll find that one of them isn't working (probably #4). Take the elevator next to the broken one to the floor you saw on the TV, and enter the broken elevator. Take the sphere and replace it with the LiftBot head. Simple! When you play this sort of game, all you need is logic and a packet of Panadol close by.



Blade Runner

FALLOUT



In the game Fallout, could you please tell me where to find the water purifying chip, what level or stage?

Kim & Gary Williams
Internet



The water chip's location can be found by first visiting the librarian in the downtown hub. Next, purchase a holodisk to show you the direct location in Necropolis.

FALLOUT



What's with this Fallout game, I can't seem to figure out how to destroy the force fields. Any ideas Oracle?

Leigh Smith
Orange NSW



The force fields in the military base can be destroyed two ways: with dynamite, or by wiring a radio into the computer on the east end of the first floor and "using" the radio to toggle the

switches for the fields. I prefer to use the radio option myself, since the dynamite can be sold for some cold hard cash.

MONKEY ISLAND 3



Help, I've looked everywhere on Blood Island and there is no compass..the Flying Welshman won't take you to Skull Island unless you have one...

Frank Heard
Hotham, VIC



If you read the encyclopaedia that you picked up way back, you'll know what you need. Use your mouth on the shaving cream. Use the needle on the magnet, and put the needle in the cork. Use the measuring cup on the seawater and put the cork/needle in the measuring cup, voila a compass. Give the compass to him and go see the weird looking "skull" on Skull Island.

MONKEY ISLAND 3



I've been looking everywhere for some easter eggs for Monkey Island 3 as Lucasarts games are full of them. There is quite a few like in the Goodsoup crypt where you can see the forest from part 1. Are there any others?

Arthur Bishop
Port Augusta, SA



looks like you have a bit of time on your hands. Don't strain yourself too much as you've found the most

CODE

Because some days you just couldn't be bothered.

UNREAL

Cheat Codes

The cheat codes are entered by pressing the ~ key, then typing any of the following:

ALLAMMO Gives 999 ammo for all guns

BEHINDVIEW o Resets to normal view

BEHINDVIEW i Puts you in Tomb Raider style view

FLY Lets you fly

GHOST Lets you walk through walls

GOD Makes you invulnerable to all attacks

OPEN MAPNAME Jump to any map, just enter the name like OPEN DIG.

PLAYERSONLY Freezes time. Press again to resume time passage.

SUMMON Lets you add a weapon or item to the world. For example:

SUMMON EIGHTBALL

SUMMON FLAKCANNON

SUMMON NALI

SUMMON SKAARJWARRIOR

WALK Returns to walk mode if you are in fly or ghost mode



WORLD CUP 98

Cheat Codes

To enable these codes, change the player's name to one of the codes and press ENTER. When all the codes are entered, press "back" so the player's name will not be changed. Now proceed to the main menu. Press "scroll lock" to activate the codes.

Zico Enable 1982 match

Hurst Enable 1982, 1974, 1970, 1966 matches

Kenny Flaming Ball

Gabo Big heads

Kyle Skeleton players

Cartman Take a dive

Gonzo Hot potato

Mr Hat Crazy Ball

Powder Silly Moves

Neila Alien Mode

X-COM: INTERCEPTOR

Cheat Codes

Press CTRL E and you will hear a double beep. Now type in these codes:

BATTLECHEAT In-flight cheat mode

CANTTOUCHTHIS Invincibility

FILLERUP Unlimited flight range

KNOWITALL All research

PAYDAY Free money

QUICKBASE Finish all bases under construction

ANDRETTI RACING

Secret Cars

To enable the extra cars choose Begin Career and register with one of these names:

CHAO BROS Indy cars

PEACEFUL OCEAN Stock cars

ARMY MEN

Cheat Codes

Press the "escape" key and type the following words:

Aeroballistics add full air support

Invulnerable makes Sarge invulnerable

Kahuna Add explosions, omniscient view, and invulnerability

Occultation stealth mode (Sarge won't be spotted unless he shoots)

Omniscient toggle between your view and omniscient view of all troops

Paralysis pins foes in place

Plethora extra ammo

Pyromancer toggle right button explosion

Succumb lose the scenario

Telekinetic teleport Sarge anywhere in the world

Triumph win the scenario

DIE BY THE SWORD

Cheat Codes

Hold down F1 while playing the game and type:

Mukor God Mode

Dedly Weapon that kicks ass.

Golrg Big Character

Btiny Small Character

COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Level Codes

Here are all the level codes:

Mission 2 **4JJXB**

Mission 3 **ZDD1T**

Mission 4 **RFF1J**

Mission 5 **K4TCG**

Mission 6 **MIR4M**

Mission 7 **7QVJV**

Mission 8 **K99XC**

Mission 9 **AAAX1**

Mission 10 **JSGPW**

Mission 11 **CMODD**

Mission 12 **JGHD3**

Mission 13 **PUUWW**

Mission 14 **WT348**

Mission 15 **139P0**

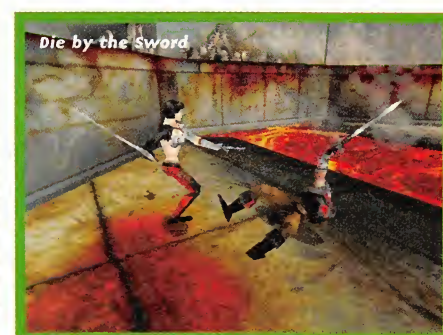
Mission 16 **L9IPV**

Mission 17 **5LIMV**

Mission 18 **YJ0JG**

Mission 19 **YFCWJ**

Mission 20 **GDKWT**



ENRICH

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Tech it to the limit, one more time

WHEN YOU WRITE, REMEMBER TO INCLUDE AS MUCH PERTINENT INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE. SEND YOUR CONFIG.SYS AND AUTOEXEC.BAT AND ANY ASSOCIATED *.INI FILES FOR WINDOWS THAT MIGHT TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM. GIVE ME AS DETAILED AN EXPLANATION AS YOU CAN AND BE SURE TO INCLUDE AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE ABOUT YOUR PC. FEEL FREE TO EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS OR, IF YOU WANT TO SNAIL MAIL, PLEASE REMEMBER TO WRITE CLEARLY OR BETTER STILL, PRINT YOUR LETTERS. PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE VOLUME OF MESSAGES WE RECEIVE, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE A RESPONSE TO YOUR QUERIES.

Setup
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick st.
Redfern
NSW 2016
setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

INTERNET

Q I am at my tether as to why I keep getting disconnected from my ISP (TIG), so I was hoping you could help. It seems that this problem is intermittent, and usually my connection is stable for about 5-10 minutes and then it gets lost; When I log back on, the connection is stable again for another 30-45 minutes and is lost again. Finally on my third go, it is stable permanently. This seems to occur daily, but sometimes does not occur on weekends. No one else I know has trouble with this ISP and I have gone through their Tech Support for help, and we still couldn't nail it down, we went through network settings, DNS settings and have even tried 2 different modems... the problem remains the same. I can only think that it could be the local Telstra exchange causing me grief, but if so, how come my old ISP (Alphalink) never had this problem while Comcen and TIG have. I just don't get it! I have even tried reinstalling my modem software and Windows 95, all to no avail and several handfuls of hair later, I am still stuck with the same weird problem. I use Win95 OEM ver 2 in combination with Netscape Communicator 4.04. I have a P-i66MMX chip in a TX motherboard, 64MB SDRAM, a 4MB ET6000 video card and am currently using a 56K FLEX modem (streama), the other modem used was a Lightspeed 33.6K modem.

Wraith
Internet

A Given all that you've tried so far and that the problem still persists, it's safe to assume the problem might be with Telstra, or specifically, the lines. Despite the wonders of our technol-

ogy, it's not infallible. Believe it or not, but rain can have a drastic effect on the quality of lines for modem users. It's something that you wouldn't notice over voice transmissions but which is bad enough to cause modems to hiccup frequently. On the other end of the line, your exchange can certainly have an effect on the quality of your connection and again that depends on where you live. Generally, though, I blame cheap modems for not being able to hold their own with dealing with line problems, and I can't vouch for Lightspeed or Xstreama modems. USR modems, for instance, are renowned for their ability to handle line quality and back in the days of yore when the Net was young and rich friends spent their time dialling the odd BBS in America, the USR was the only modem able to handle international lines.

But help is at hand. If your modem is a fax modem you can use fax software to dial Telstra's line quality monitor service. The service will run a series of tests down the line that and send back a fax of the results. If you then contact the manufacturer of your modem you can use those results to help them set your modem up to better handle your specific line. Most modems have switches for negotiating line quality, but which switches to use and which settings depends entirely on the results from the line quality test. And yes, it can make a very big difference. The number is 1300 368999, just make sure your fax software uses your phone number in the header, as the service reads this to dial back.

ALONG WITH THE COOLEST NAME IN THE BIZ, US ROBOTICS MODEMS ARE ONE OF THE BEST THERE IS FOR DEALING WITH LINE PROBLEMS



SWITCH BOX

Q G'day, I was wondering if there was a 4 way joystick adapter for the PC, because I have a 4 button Gravis pad, a steering wheel, a joystick and a midi interface for my keyboard, now I am tired of taking out putting in all these different adapters. Is there such a device available to switch between 4 different plugs with a switch or is it easy to build one?

Steven
Internet

A I haven't heard of a 4 way adapter, but then I'm no joystick king. You can certainly build your own though and it wouldn't cost much. If you're a friend of soldering all you'll need are four 15 pin female plugs and 1 15 pin male with a bit of cable. Switch boxes can often be purchased at electronic stores and while most only come with two settings you might be able to find four. You can then pull it apart and use the shell of the box without a rear panel to hook up your own plugs to the switch.

PII OR NOT?

Q I have been told by a friend that the Pentium II isn't as fast as we think. This is because a PII motherboard doesn't have a cache. This is meant to slow down the computer and make a PII not worth it. I have also been told by another friend that the PII has an onboard cache. Who is right? Should I buy a PII or not?

Julian
Internet

A If there's one lesson to learn in life it's never listen to your friends, trust only PCPP! First up it's true that PII motherboards don't have an L2 (Level 2, secondary cache) and this is because PII's come with an L2 built in on the card. This makes it much faster than an L2 cache found on a motherboard (like with Pentium motherboards) because with a PII the cache runs at half the clock speed on the CPU, whereas on Pentium motherboards the L2 cache only runs as fast as the bus speed.

Gibberish? Put it this way — a standard P200 MMX system runs on a bus speed of 66MHz, so the L2 cache is accessed at 66MHz (around 410M a second, read average). A Pentium II 266 has an L2 cache running at 133MHz (around 800M a second, read average) and a PII 400 has a 200MHz L2 cache! When the Pentium II Xeon arrives the L2 cache will run at the same frequency as the CPU, meaning a PII 500 Xeon will have a 500MHz L2 cache. Yes, that's good. Oh baby.

Why is this important? The Celeron doesn't have an L2 cache at all, and this greatly degrades performance (the

PENTIUM II CHIPSETS HAVE AN L2 MEMORY CACHE ONBOARD, WHICH MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE. JUST STAY AWAY FROM CELERON

pentium II
PROCESSOR

Celeron is Intel's low-end chip). The L2 cache is used by the CPU to hold temporary data, the larger the cache the more efficient the CPU can be. Alpha machines often come with 2M of L2. It's not just size that matters, but speed. If the CPU can access this temporary data quicker, it can complete its computations quicker and doesn't have to hang around waiting for the information to arrive. When the Xeon arrives the performance improvement will be phenomenal.

NULL WHAT?

Q In issue eleven and the Hot Hardware Guide there is an article called Doing It With Friends. Even though it was ultimately a LAN guide, my friends don't have the money for Ethernet cards. So I was wondering if you could tell me about the serial cable in a 2 player Null modem game. My Mum and Dad have used Null Modems before and I have a fair knowledge of them but the one thing neither of them are sure about is on the actual cable, is it the 3rd and 5th wire that need to be crossed over?

**Chris
Internet**

A Yes, that's it. Pin 3 is 'Serial in' and pin 5 is 'Serial out'. A null modem cable is simply a standard serial cable (like that which connects your modem to your PC, for those that don't know) with the 'send' and 'receive' pins swapped. This way each PC's 'send'

line is connected to the other's 'receive'. Making your own is just a matter of finding a serial cable, pulling it apart and swapping pins 3 and 5 on one end only. I once purchased a null modem cable from a big name computer store (which I won't mention here) who made their own cables. After spending an hour trying to get it to work and wondering why, I pulled it apart to find they had swapped 3 and 5 on each end, creating nothing more than a standard serial cable.

Playing with a null modem in games however can be a little tricky. Some games have support for null modems, but for those that don't it's still possible to select 'modem play' as long as you're not required to dial or answer.

ER, I ERRED...

Greg Hughes wrote in to correct me on my description of page faults in issue #24. Greg writes:

"Paging is what operating systems, that employ virtual memory techniques, use to handle memory that is too big for the amount of physical memory in the computer. If a program tries to use a page of memory that was not brought into memory, an (operating system) error is flagged (an invalid address error - the page fault). The error is the result of the operating system's failure to bring in a valid part of the program into memory, in an attempt to minimize swapping overhead and memory requirements."

Thanks for bringing this to my attention Greg!

Tech Tips

Personalise your PC with quick & easy tweaking tips

DA KEYS! DA KEYS!

If you're anything like me then speed is always a priority. That, and ease of use. In fact just about anything that gets the job done quickly and easily is good. That's why home delivery pizza is such a success. Mmmm...

Anyway, if mouse clicks are getting too slow for you, remember these keyboard shortcuts for quick touch navigating.

CTRL-ESC	Open the Start menu
TAB	Select the next menu item
SHIFT-TAB	Opposite of TAB
ALT	Set focus to the menu
ALT-F4	Close current app
ALT-TAB	Cycle between running apps
ALT-ENTER	Switch between full/windowed DOS box
ALT-ESC	Send current window to the back
ALT-SPACEBAR-X	Maximise current app
ALT-SPACEBAR-N	Minimise current app
ALT-SPACEBAR	Display current window's context menu
SHIFT-F10	Display current object's context menu
CTRL-ALT-DEL	Display process list
CTRL	Magnify effect of cursor keys
CTRL-A	Select all
CTRL-C	Copy
CTRL-X	Cut
CTRL-V	Paste

And lastly, if you absolutely hate Autorun autorunning your CDs every time you insert them, especially because you installed the game ages ago, just hold down SHIFT when you insert the CD.

JUST WEIRD

The next, er, tip is from Nick 'Toothpick the Quake2 arse kicker' Pelly

FILE TRANSFER FOR ULTRA DUMMIES

Want to transfer a file from your computer to a mate's who is not on the internet, and too computer illiterate to use Hyperterminal? Here's how it can be done.

- Step 1.** Rename the file you want to transfer to a Red Alert map file (*.mpr)
- Step 2.** Place it in your Red Alert directory
- Step 3.** Connect to your mate's computer using the modem game option in Red Alert.
- Step 4.** Select the name of the file you want to transfer in the map box. Click on Start Game.
- Step 5.** Wait for Red Alert to transfer the 'map'.
- Step 6.** Get your friend to quit Red Alert and rename the file with its correct extension.

Of course, there are some psychologically disturbed people out there who would zip the file onto a few floppies and *shudder* physically transport it to their mates' house, but we try and avoid such evils.

Nick, you're weird. But we like weird, ever thought of entering Freak Of The Month?

Intel playing games at last, but only with its customers.

INTEL Express 3D Accelerator

Never one to miss the technology boat, Intel introduces its very own 3D accelerator.

Intel Express 3D Graphics Card

Chipset: Intel i740 featuring: Specular highlighting, edge anti-aliasing, Intel's proprietary pixel interpolation (for sharper images), DVD playback at 24 fps, direct memory execution (allowing for 16Mb of graphics textures to be stored in system memory) and full AGP 2X support.

Intel's intentions

The Intel Express 3D graphics card utilising the i740 chipset, is Intel's big move into the world of 3D acceleration. The Intel Express, unlike other 3D accelerators, doesn't target the current average consumer. AGP is definitely a fantastic facet of technology gaming however, with no PCI version available, the Intel Express is aimed at a more progressive future market than the current gamer.

AGP-only

The i740 is an impressive accelerator. Like a cross between the Power VR and the 3Dfx Voodoo 1; textures have an excellent crispness and clarity to them. Likewise, colours within the scene were vibrant and similar to the quality displayed from a Voodoo 2. On a less conspicuous level, was the strange absence of many standard second-generation

3D features such as trilinear or anisotropic filtering and bump mapping.

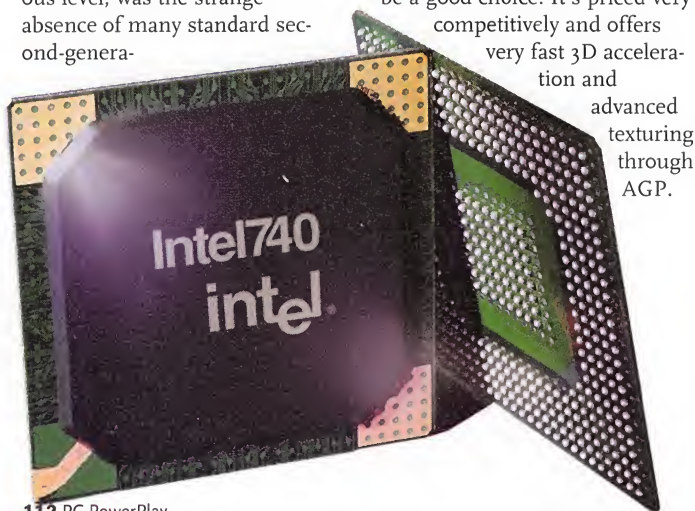
What possibly makes up for these deficiencies is viewing AGP in action. With system memory available to a programmer for textures and the added bonus of a 528 Megabit per second bus, scenes can be painted in ways not seen before.

The best example of enhanced AGP scene texturing is in one of Intel's demos featuring a chapel. Not only does it move at a healthy 30 frames a second, but paintings, sculptures and many more textures than what could be fit on a conventional 3D accelerator adorn the virtual world and offer a new sense of immersion.

In terms of 2D, the Express also performs well, though again no Powerbench can be given for the same reasons as in 3D. Potentially the card's greatest asset though is the ability for it to play DVD at 24 frames a second. Intel hint that a DVD decoder may still be desirable, particularly as a combined hardware TV in/out DVD upgrade is available for the card.

In conclusion, if you have a P2 AGP motherboard and are looking for a powerful 2D/3D solution, the Intel Express would be a good choice. It's priced very competitively and offers

very fast 3D acceleration and advanced texturing through AGP.



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3DTech News

UPGRADE SALVATION?

Hopefully coming to rescue us all from the inequity of processor limitation is Fujitsu. They've come up with a Geometry Processor called the Pinolite which will take processing burdens away from the CPU.

Geometry Processors have been strangely absent from second generation 3D accelerators, despite appearing on first generation cards. Is it all some kind of conspiracy, or is Intel just so amazingly clever that 3D accelerator companies have decided to leave geometry in the hands of the CPU only?

Theoretically, with the Pinolite, you'd get performance equal to a P2-266 running the same graphics card. Normally it is the CPU that does this work, but as the CPU has other things to calculate, this slows down the performance. Also slower CPU's can't deliver enough polygons/sec which results in your 3D card not running at its full speed (known as "processor limitation"). When a geometry processor is fitted on a 3D board, all calculations will be made on the board, reducing bottlenecks and increasing speed.

Pinolite should be available to 3D accelerator manufacturers to include on their boards, or hopefully, available as a plug in card for your PC. We salute you

Fujitsu. As we the gamer are starting down the barrel of the eternal upgrade nightmare yet again, even after 3D accelerators came to save us, Pinolite might just be able to keep our wallets in our back pocket that bit longer.

K6 3DNow!

Software written to take advantage of 3DNow! instructions (AMD K6-2) actually perform better than the same software running on a higher speed Pentium 2. The key words here are "software written to take advantage of". Using standard, off the shelf software with no 3DNow support, the K6-2 performed nowhere near the level that it did with the 3DNow! software.

Tests were made at E3 using Quake 2 on a Voodoo 2 accelerated AMD K6-2 and these were the results:

The power of 3DNow!

K6-2 333 (95MHz bus x 3.5) running Quake 2 Time Demo 1 using the AMD 3DNow! OpenGL patch.

- 2 Monster 3D-II's running in SLI mode at 800 x 600 (3DNow! enabled) : 77 fps
- 1 Monster 3D II (3DNow! enabled) : 54 fps
- 1 Monster 3D II (3DNow! disabled) : 43 fps.

Quick Bytes

QUAKE ARENA

John Carmack recently announced that what was once Quake 3, would now be Quake Arena. The biggest surprise is that the game will be multiplayer only incorporating CTF and other derivatives. The single player game will just be a progression through a ranking ladder against bot AIs. ID admit it's a gamble, but it's original!

DUKE NUKEM 4 WILL USE UNREAL ENGINE

George Broussard has recently stated that Duke Nukem Forever will be using the Unreal Engine. The question of course is are we are going to have to

wait 6 months longer for Duke Nukem Forever? Most likely not. Apogee will use the same art that they were using for the Quake 2 engine, and just import them into the more powerful Unreal engine.

BLACK & WHITE

Ex Bullfrog head Peter Molyneux is hard at work on a





(above & right) Peter Molyneux (Populous, Dungeon Keeper) has a new vision of God-sim gaming. It's 3D and it's called Black & White (below & below right) Machines is a 3D C&C strategy game that we had a play with. It's early days, but has great potential



K6-2 AND NVIDIA

Nvidia has posted new drivers for their Riva 128 that adds support for the K6-2 and 3DNow! instructions. This patch should bring the

Riva128 up to near Voodoo level performance.

HEAVY GEAR II

Heavy Gear II won't be pulling any punches on the graphics front, with Voodoo2 SLI support already included with hopes of supporting 1600x1200 resolution if you happen to have a RivaTNT board. Heavy Gear II currently uses the Direct3D engine, however, the team will be offering support for Glide, PowerVR's SG board, and possibly the Rendition Redline. There's even the possibility of H3D glasses support.



MACHINES

Machines from Acclaim follows in Battlezone's footsteps. Machines is a 4-player tactical and strategic management simulation which is both a war game and a management sim. You take control of one of four silicon-based life forms on a mission to seed and dominate new worlds. Players can hide, attack, and sneak units inside buildings to conduct covert operations. It will include 4 player network



and Internet multi-player game campaign modes.

new PC project called Black & White. A god sim, the player's goal is to collect as many worshippers as possible. In the beginning, the player's people don't know the difference between good and evil. The player, as their god, must teach them so they will evolve into better worshippers. Black & White will primarily be a multiplayer game with up to 200 players supported via the Internet.

WING COMMANDER SECRET OPS

Origin have just announced that starting later this summer, they will be releasing the next Wing Commander game on the Internet for free. Secret Ops will be a stand alone product with 56 new single player missions split into seven campaigns. Origin will post a new Secret Ops episode on the Wing Commander website, <http://www.secretops.com>, each week beginning later this winter.

READERS LETTER:

3DFX ON A BUDGET

Q I am not an expert on 3Dfx cards, but I am planning on buying one around spring this year. I do not really want to spend a lot of money (around \$250-\$320) and have been looking at Diamond's Monster 3D card.

Would it be better to buy an earlier card that is already outdated, or wait around for a cheaper Voodoo 2? Could you please give me some suggestions on a sensible purchase?

Daniel Fletcher
Internet

A Despite loving the Voodoo 2 in every way when I reviewed it, I would actually have to suggest that you buy the cheaper Diamond Monster 3D (which you

should be able to pick up for about \$175-\$200). This is in no way a decision based on performance or preference, but purely financial. The Voodoo 2 is an excellent card and definitely offers greater acceleration than a Voodoo 1, but at a cost - a rather significant one at that.

Based on your strained budget, the Voodoo 1 would be a better choice as the Voodoo 2 really only starts to shine in a Pentium 2. The best advice I can offer is to keep saving for that Pentium 2 and also plan to get a Voodoo 2 at the time of upgrading. Not only will the price have dropped, but you'll have a processor that will take advantage of second generation 3D technology.

Few things in life are free, here's one

OVERCLOCKING

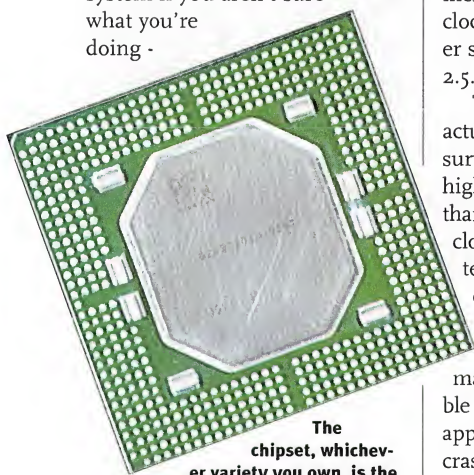
More bang for your buck

Much cheaper than an expensive chipset upgrade, overclocking your CPU can be a rewarding, although hazardous, experience

Now first let's get a few things clear from the start; PC PowerPlay will not be held responsible for any damage incurred while practising the art of overclocking - you do this at your own risk. We will also not be responsible for the insane system speeds that may be achieved once the overclocking addiction is realised.

Okay, now seriously, many of you still have an old Pentium processor in your system, and you're probably thinking that it's about time to upgrade. However, if the piggy bank is a little empty at the moment you might want to think about overclocking your existing chip, rather than going for an expensive chipset upgrade.

Firstly, don't overclock your system if you aren't sure what you're doing -



The chipset, whichever variety you own, is the engine room of your entire PC

this should only be attempted by experienced computer enthusiasts (and even then approach it with caution). It's also a good idea for your chip to be out of warranty (overclocking your chip will, of course, void warranty), and if you do experience any problems don't continue to fiddle - just go back to the default settings and leave it at that.

What you will need is your original motherboard manual, if you still have it. What you are

looking for is the jumper block that allows you to change the clock multiplier settings of your motherboard. For example if you have a Pentium 133 at the moment the system bus speed would be 66MHz and the clock multiplier would be 2. In many cases you can safely take a Pentium 133 to 166MHz without too much of a problem. This is usually achieved by increasing the clock multiplier setting to 2.5.

Take heed though, if you actually want your computer to survive then don't push it much higher than around 1/4 more than its original speed. Once the clock speed has been changed, test your system for an extended period (it's a great excuse to play Quake II until insane hours of the morning) to make sure that the system is stable at that speed. If any errors appear or your machine starts to crash regularly take the clock multiplier down again and start

"If the piggy bank is a little empty at the moment you might want to think about overclocking your existing chip, rather than going for an expensive chipset upgrade."

saving for that new PC.

Those who are lucky enough to have a socket 7-style board in the same league as the one reviewed in the last issue can have even more fun. Not only can you change the clock multiplier settings you can also

(inset) The jumper switches on the motherboard. Consult your manual for instructions on how to set them

increase the system bus clock frequency. Newer motherboards will support a bus frequency of 75MHz to accommodate the Cyrix 6x86 Processor some may even have support for the 83.3MHz system bus. So if you have a Pentium 133 or 150 you can clock it at a speed of 75MHz

with a clock multiplier of 2, which is a lot faster than a standard Pentium 150MHz.

Increasing the bus speed will create problems for many systems however - particularly with the PCI bus. When the original PCI specification was formed, 33MHz was

decided on as the PCI bus frequency. When running at 66MHz this presents no problems because the PCI clock is derived by halving the bus speed. However, when the bus speed is upped to 75MHz, or even 83.3MHz, the PCI bus is similarly upped (to 37.5 and 41.65MHz respectively), and some PCI devices will refuse to work correctly at this speed. It is a hit and miss affair though - if you're confident enough to try overclocking and it works, then great. A P200MMX running at 83.3 x 2.5 (208.25MHz) will absolutely fly...if it works. If you know what you're doing, then experiment a little to see what bus/clock speed suits your system the best, but please be careful - chips are very expensive to replace.

Gary Wallis



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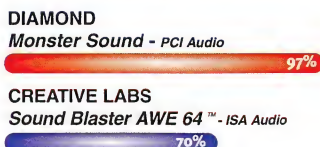
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CPU availability* PCI vs ISA sound cards



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DO-IT-YOURSELF LAN PARTIES

What to do when you have friends

LAN (Local Area Network) parties can be fantastic experiences, but they can also be difficult to set up and run. Fear not though, *Munly Leong* will walk you through it.

What is a LAN Party?

A LAN (Local Area Network) party is basically a local network get together. A bunch of people bring over their computer somewhere, hook them all up, play network games and engage in other network-ish activities.

Why a LAN party?

No matter how much fun playing against the computer AI is, nothing beats the adrenaline rush from playing a live, thinking (usually) human being.

Everyone knows the difference playing against mates makes, especially those who've tried Bomberman, Mario Kart or any wrestling games on the consoles. For PC gamers, Doom, the Quake series and Command and Conquer do the multiplayer job extremely well along with a host of others. These days, games are being developed with multiplayer in mind and a single player game added in afterwards, with such examples as X-Wing vs Tie Fighter one of the greatest multi-

player shoot'em ups ever made.

LAN gaming has really exploded recently, thanks to Quake. In the ye olde days of B.Q. (Before Quake) it was always fun to grab a few mates for a bit of a bash in Doom, or have a go on the office network, but these were diversions at best compared to the multiplayer explosion that has been Quake. This was the game that really showed us what the net could do, and how fun multiplayer gaming could be. That wasn't

enough, people started banding together and forming clans. These clans were willing to go all over the country to play other clans. Soon people were having huge parties just to play Quake, lugging all manner of computer equipment and 'Quake accessories' to meet and play people they'd never met except online.

Playing on the net is perfectly fine but one suffers a major amount of 'lag' which is the waiting period between the time when you move the mouse or

press a key to the time something actually happens, and depending on the server you're going through, this could be either annoying, or so bad that you're fragged ten times before your screen even updates.

Lan parties have minimum to no lag whatsoever, and nothing's better than getting a few buds together and having a good go at Quake, TA, Q2, Starcraft, Unreal, Age Of Empires, and so on. Not to mention the person-to-person contact, the ease of lobbing a few demoralising insults down at the guy who tele-fragged you twice in a row, and laughing at that poor, inept fellow that keeps blowing himself up every time he tries to rocket jump (usually me).

How do I set one up?

Easily, for those that are already somewhat experienced/knowledgeable, check the checklist sidebar. Otherwise the rest of you better read on carefully as I explain the ins and outs, and the almost suicidal (well hair-pulling anyway) perils of what could (and usually does) go wrong the first time.

First of all you have to decide if you want to setup a proper client/server network or a simple peer to peer setup. You may have also heard of coaxial and UTP cabling and may be wondering what the difference is. Well, fear not, as all will soon become clear.

Client/Server and UTP vs Peer to Peer and Coaxial

Firstly, if you're just grabbing about 2 or 3 mates and lugging it all down to the rich bloke's house, then chances are you'll be setting up a peer to peer network. A peer to peer network is basically each computer hooked up to each other and running coaxial cable (the black ones). No more than six computers is recommended and eight is the absolute maximum before you'll start experiencing network slowdown. All you'll need for that sort of setup will be explained later in Hardware and Cabling.

Installing all the network cards and getting them all configured is the first step, once

you've gotten that all set up, adjust the access levels and configuration in Windows and with any luck you should be up and running in less than an hour. Keep in mind though, that anyone with a bodgy network card, or bad connection that drops out, will most likely bring the whole network down, especially if he/she is the "weak link".

Setting it up with UTP is another matter, and that's where things get a bit more tricky. In a UTP network, the wires branch out from a central hub (a box to which all the computers are connected, and through which data is routed) much like the spokes of a wheel. A UTP network will be better for a big LAN party, but setting up a hub requires some fiddling and many people will prefer the simplicity of the coaxial system.



No power, no party... Be sure to bring many more powerboards than you expect to use...



MANDATORY THINGS

Venue

Without a venue, you have no event. First of all, work out exactly how many people will be attending, and always cater for a little more than you'll expect. Trekking down to your local community centre will get you a list of venues, usually prepared for people such as yourself. Needless to say, phone numbers and addresses could be a 'little' out of date, so the local library is highly recommended instead, they have online catalogues of

community halls and venues, and are likely to be a bit more current. Your best bet is to go for church and school halls which are usually the cheapest and most appropriate venue.

Depending on the venue, be it scouting halls or drama houses, do your phone work early and inquire about rates and the availability of the venue. With regard to school halls, it is best if you organise something with them about 2-4 weeks in advance, especially if you are planning for the school holidays. Then it's usually better to contact them before the holidays and arrange for a time you can pick up a key.

Power

The next most important thing you should check out is power. If there aren't enough power points, either you might overload the circuits by splitting too much or some computers will have to sit the LAN out. Most of today's computers will only have to use one power point, with the monitor plugging into the second socket in the power supply of the PC. That's assuming of course that the bare minimum setup is taken to the party, no printer, modem, scanner or other accessories.

Next you'll need power stations. These are those multiple socket boards (NOT the adapters) that you can purchase at BBC Hardware, Dick Smith etc. They usually support at least four sockets although these days they go up to six or more. And just in case they overload, most have a built-in circuit breaker which will cut off power if things start overloading. To be safe, you'd want to keep an average of four computers (with a maximum of six) on any one power station so as not to overload

the power point. Depending on how many computers are going on the night, try to arrange at least four power points in the venue for everything, or some heavy duty power stations.

Furniture

Once again the hall should provide, but check it out well before the night just in case you'll have to arrange to borrow some. Your school or university is usually a good bet, another church is another one. Next, you'll have to arrange a time to pick them up and transport. Plan it well in advance just in case you'll have to pay for a moving truck or something. All that's left then is to arrange them all.

Cabling

The pros and cons between UTP and Coaxial have already been explained, so all you need to do is work out what type of



arrangement you'll need and buy the cables. It's best to buy a little more than you'll need in case you decide to alter the arrangement. Coaxial cable is cheapest; they're the black types that look very much like the wire used for cable TV. The cable is run from one computer to the next, to the next—until you get to the last computer, where you add a cap called a terminator. Thin Ethernet runs at only 10 mbps, much slower than UTP.

Thin Ethernet requires a BNC connector, a little metal cylinder with two nubs near the outside edge. You can buy standard lengths of cable that already have connectors, or you can buy the connectors at any good computer store and crimp or twist them on using a special tool.

UTP cable looks like telephone cord (except it's blue) and is more flexible than thin Ethernet. If you're willing to buy more expensive adapter cards and a hub, UTP can run at 100 mbps - much faster than thin Ethernet. Any ethernet network card you buy today will come with a UTP port anyway so there's nothing to worry about. With UTP, you'll need an RJ-45 connector, which looks sort of like the connector on a telephone cord. Again, standard lengths usually come with the connector in place.

Hardware

The next step is getting the network cards and connectors. You'll need one network card and one set of connectors and cables for each computer. A network card is the piece of hardware that physically connects the cables to your computer. The brand of card isn't important, but make sure each one works with your operating system. An absolutely safe bet for matching your OS is to check the box to see whether the card is compatible with the Novell NE2000 card. The NE2000 is a time-honoured design that works with all



Although most screens will be lined up next to each other, etiquette demands no peeking!

of the operating systems for PC's. These days PCI cards are the go, since almost everyone has a Pentium, however the ISA standard is available for those without any free PCI slots or an ancient computer. PCI cards are a bit more expensive but probably worth the cost if your computer can use them.

Make sure that the card you choose also has the correct cable connector, UTP or coaxial. Virtually all cards today come with both kinds, enabling you to change your cabling system later without buying new cards. At your local computer store, you should find basic 10-mbps Ethernet network interface cards for about \$40-60. The cheapest cards require you to run an installation program to set them up. Avoid cards that aren't plug-and-play and don't have installation software!

If you go with UTP, you'll also need to purchase a basic 10BaseT hub, any computer store should be able to sell you one. Be sure to get one that has several more ports (or connections) than you have comput-

Other LAN Events

Whet your appetite yet? Here are some more real-life examples of some upcoming LAN events.

Gibcon 98: This one's got a huge waiting list but is probably going to rock the hardest. <http://gibcon.digidata.com.au>

Point Quake: Smaller but available, still bound to be a good upcoming bash. <http://www.netspace.net.au/~rigga/pointquake/>

Quake Fest 4: Last but definitely not least, this is going to rock HARD! The biggest and soon to be the best LAN event ever coming your way with over a hundred people expected. December 98 - January 99, full details TBA. <http://www.ozemail.com.au/~quakefest/>

LAN Party Resources

Insomnia 98: This was our LAN party, a full report is available on the site. HUGE thanks to Braenet who graciously sponsoring the site, and to all who attended. <http://insomnia.braenet.com.au>, or <http://www.braenet.com.au/~dream/>

The Quakefest page: Details on the previous Quake Fests and how they went, I wish I hadn't missed those! <http://vdpower.gamesmania.com/quakefest/>

Multiplayer Unlimited: These guys do this sort of thing professionally, they set up AND promote LAN events all the time, and in Australia too! This is definitely worth checking out. <http://www.mpu.com.au/>

The official LAN party ring:

The webbing for LAN parties all over the world, it's also useful for finding ones near you. <http://www.bangg.org/lanring/>



ers: you don't want to have to buy a new hub when one person goes over the limit! If need be, purchase more hubs, you can daisy chain them together and even if some people need to run coaxial cable, it shouldn't be a problem since most hubs have a coaxial backup socket at the back, and since the hub knows that coaxial is slower, it'll get priority.

If you want, you'll also have to find a computer to act as a server for ultra smooth gameplay, especially Quake. This computer can be running the Quakeworld server software, and can also act as a file server at the same time for those vital patches, drivers, and utilities. We recommend a bare minimum of a Pentium 100 with 16 Meg RAM, although 32 is recommended. The hard drive can be of any size as long as it can boot up and has enough free space left on it to install whatever games and software is needed.

Organisation and People

Good organisation can often make or break a LAN party. This is where we nearly stuffed every-

thing up completely! First of all you have to make sure that everyone is kept informed, especially well in advance of the actual event. To do this you'll need everyone's full real names, contact phone numbers, mailing lists, email addresses, ICQ numbers etc; anything that can get you in contact with people and quickly in case there are any drastic changes. Make sure that whatever is vital to the operation of the network is definitely confirmed and available and in the organiser's hands ready to go well before the event. This is to ensure that no one person is responsible for bringing a vital piece of equipment that is vital to the network e.g. cabling or hubs. It's best to plan out the network structure beforehand and leave room for any additional people to come in, hook the cables in and start playing. The best way to set up the network is to go to the venue with the other organisers and a few aides, and set it all up the day/night before. That way when people arrive the next day, they can quickly hook the computers up and go, rather than to waste the day setting up the network.



Price and Checklist

Sadly, LAN parties aren't free (although I wish they were!) Here's a check list of the stuff you have to get. I've also included prices from Dick Smith, and from a local store called All Bits 'n' Bytes which are located at 263 Forest Rd Hurstville, you can give them a call on (02) 9585-2288. All prices are correct at the time of printing. You may also find cheaper prices elsewhere, so shop around.

Equipment	Dick Smith	Bits 'n' Bytes
Crimping Tool	49.95	55.00
UTP per metre	1.75	1.50
Coaxial per metre	1.35	1.25
RJ45 Plug	8.25 X 2	17.00 X 5
BNC (coax) Plug	3.00	17.00 X 5
BNC T-Connector	3.95	20.00 X 5
UTP prepared cable	35.00	20.00
BNC prepared cable	29.95	14.00
BNC Terminators	4.00	7.50 X 2

Note : prepared cables are based on ten metres of length, a shorter cable may be significantly cheaper.

As for the hubs, you can expect to pay somewhere around these prices - though again, shop around to find the best deal.

18 port HUB Hostlink - \$285

8 port HUB SMC - \$250

No name 16 Port HUB - \$175

No name 8 Port HUB - \$99

While the no name hubs are cheaper, they may be lacking in quality or features such as an uplink port which means you won't be able to link hubs together. It is possible to do a "RX crossover" but this requires some technical knowledge.

SETTING IT ALL UP

Hardware

Here comes the fun part, Setting up the hardware. Below is a separate set of instructions for both Coaxial and UTP, but before doing so, install the network card first according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Coaxial

1) You now need a T-connector and two terminator plugs. The T-connector is T-shaped, obviously, with two BNC ports to which you can attach cables. Terminator plugs look like T-connectors without BNC ports, and cap off the end of the network.

2) Attach a T-connector to the BNC port on your network card to the round cylindrical part sticking out.

3) Connect the computers together by attaching the Ethernet cable to the other T-connector port. The ones in the middle of the network will have cables attached to both T-connector ports, while the PCs on each end of the network will have one cable and one terminator each.

UTP

1) Plug one end of the UTP cable into the NIC port. Your roBaseT hub should already be plugged into an electrical outlet that's hooking up all the comput-

ers in your network.

2) Insert the other end of each computer's UTP cable into a port in the hub, and your hardware installation is complete if you are not running multiple hubs. If you are, read on.

3) Attach a UTP cable to the uplink port of one hub, and attach it to another, and so on. If the hubs you are using do not have an uplink port, you will have to use an RX crossover, which is fairly complicated for most people. Tandy or Dick Smith should be able to help you if you need to do this.

4) There is another alternative: you can link two hubs together by using coaxial cable through the coaxial output in the back. Just attach the cabling as normal. Other computers unable to use UTP cabling can also be hooked up in this way.

Software

For the purposes of this article, we will cover the setup process in Windows 95 only as it is the easiest and most commonly used. However, a large network/LAN party will benefit from Linux or NT servers as those operating systems were designed with networking in mind, although they are not entirely necessary depending on the size of the network being set

3D Shooters

Doom 2 - IPX, 8 players per game.

Quake - IPX, TCP/IP; 16 players per game. Optional Client/Server with Quakeworld

Quake 2 - TCP/IP; up to 100 possible players, but realistically 16-32 (if server can handle it) Optional Client/Server with Quakeworld.

Duke Nukem 3D - IPX, 8 players

Heavy Gear - IPX, 8 players.

Unreal - TCP/IP, IPX, client server model

Forsaken - TCP/IP, IPX, 12 players

Flight Sims

Xwing vs Tie Fighter - IPX, TCP/IP, 8 players

F22 ADF - TCP/IP, IPX/, 8 players

Longbow 2 - TCP/IP, IPX/, 4 players

EF2000 - IPX/, 4 players

Real Time Strategy

Starcraft - IPX, 8 players per game, spawn installs

Total Annihilation - IPX, 10 players per game, each copy can spawn 3 installs.

Dark Reign - IPX, 8 players per game, 4 players per CD

Command and Conquer Red Alert - 8 players per game, 1 player per CD

Warcraft 2 - IPX, 8 players per game 3 Players per CD

Age of Empires - IPX, 8 players per game. 3 players per CD

Racing & Driving

Need for Speed 2 - IPX, 8 players.

Need for Speed SE - IPX, 8 players.

Moto Racer - IPX, TCP/IP, 8 players

TOCA Racing - IPX, TCP/IP, 8 players

F1 Racing Sim - IPX/, 8 players

Cart Racing - TCP/IP, IPX, 8 players

Others

Diablo - IPX, 4 players per game.

Battlezone - IPX, 4 for strategy mode, 8 for deathmatch



up. After following the initial steps, choose your method of networking, be it UTP, IPX or TCP/IP, then go for it.

Setting up your Network (Client) Computer

- 1) Make sure "Client for Microsoft Networks" is installed, without it your computer won't be able to communicate with the other computers.
- 2) In Network settings, check the "Identification" tab and make sure you give your computer a name and assign it to a workgroup. The name is obviously what's going to show when someone's trawling through the network in search of "those" sound clips to mass download to their computer when you're playing Quake, so make sure you give it a really witty name like "Quake God" or the like. The workgroup on the other hand is the particular part of the network you belong to. It's usually nice for everyone to belong to the same one for convenience. It can also be used to separate a particular group who wish to play Quake only, CTF etc. Some clans especially like to keep themselves within their own clan workgroup.
- 3) Check the "access control" tab in network, and select the shared resource option. The other options are for use with NT networking, which you probably won't need.

IPX

There's nothing really to it, when installing your network card, just make sure the IPX/SPX

protocol (should come on all PCI Ethernet cards these days anyway) is enabled. It is the backbone for most games, and is the main protocol that coaxial networks rely on, along with TCP/IP.

TCP/IP

- 1) Go to the Start Menu, then settings and choose Control Panel.
- 2) Select Network, and choose the configurations tab.
- 3) Select the TCP/IP setting on your network adapter/card.
- 4) Select Properties.
- 5) Select the IP address tab then enter your IP address. Every computer on the network that runs TCP/IP must have its own unique IP address. This address is written in four sets of three numbers. E.g. 134.133.122.045, the first three identify the network ID. The easiest and most correct way is to use 192.168.0.x, where x is a any three digit number that doesn't clash with someone else's.

Setting up the File Sharing

Every LAN party will have people downloading levels and patches (at the least) off each other's hard drives. Having the ability to share files with each other is a really nifty feature that you have to have at a LAN party. Here's how to do it:

- 1) Double-click the Network icon in the Control Panel, and then click the File And Print Sharing button on the Configuration tab.
- 2) Select the two checkboxes to give others access to your files

Now, go for it! It can be a technical toughie, but a successful LAN party is well worth it. Frag hard, gamers! And a big thankyou to the Pointquake people (www.netspace.net.au/~rigga/pointquake) for allowing us to use the pictures from their LAN party.

- 3) In Windows Explorer, right-click the name of the disk or directory that you want to share; then select Sharing from the menu. That brings up the Sharing tab on the disk/directory on the Properties dialog box, where you can specify what access you want others to have.
- 4) When you're done, other network users running Windows can access the files by double-clicking a Network Neighborhood icon or by using Windows Explorer or File Manager.

But where's the server?

You don't need one. At least not yet. This is all a small LAN party will require. Usually, there will be a computer or two that will be taken out to act as a dedicated Quakeworld server, which will probably act as the file server as well, with patches, levels, skins and the like. It is a server as in it's doing a lot of work, but apart from that there's not much to separate that and the other computers, unless you want a dedicated Quakeworld server going for every type of Quake game running at the same time. You will find as the LAN events you plan become more ambitious, that you have a greater need for a dedicated server.



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WEBRINGS

Last month we showed you how easy it was to create your own Web Site. Now that you've got it up and running, how do you get people to visit it?

Firstly, you can put it on some of the more popular search engines such as Yahoo or Alta Vista, but this is flawed because people won't search for your site if they don't know it exists.

Another more successful way of doing it is to send the URL throughout your ICQ list, and hopefully all your contacts will send it to all of their contacts and so on. A bit "hit and miss" isn't it? One option many people forget is Webrings.

What's a Webring?

A Webring is simply a group of related sites which you can easily navigate between using a special panel in your web page. A lot of pages have them, while some are part of multiple Webrings. This panel generally allows you to travel to the next, previous or skip sites, as well as giving the facility to join up if you want to. The major advantage of being part of a Webring is that you can "bleed" hits from other sites and they can do the same from you, they allow you to combine your power basically, sort of like a coalition of Web Sites.

is no Webring covering your site's material? Well now my friend, it is time to make your own.

Starting your own Ring

It's a common myth that Webrings are difficult to make and maintain. The truth is, while they may take a little while to get up and running, they won't require much attention unless they get really large. Follow these easy steps to Webring happiness.

Step 1: Go to <http://www.webring.org> and click on the "Join" option in the menu, on the next screen, go down to the bottom and click on "Make your own Webring now." This is where you actually begin to create

your Webring. There is a disclaimer here about how hard it is to make a Webring, ignore that and click on "I agree". What follows is a series of questions asking you things like what your Webring will be called, and you have to create a Ring ID as well as a password. All of this is quite self explanatory so you shouldn't have too much trouble.

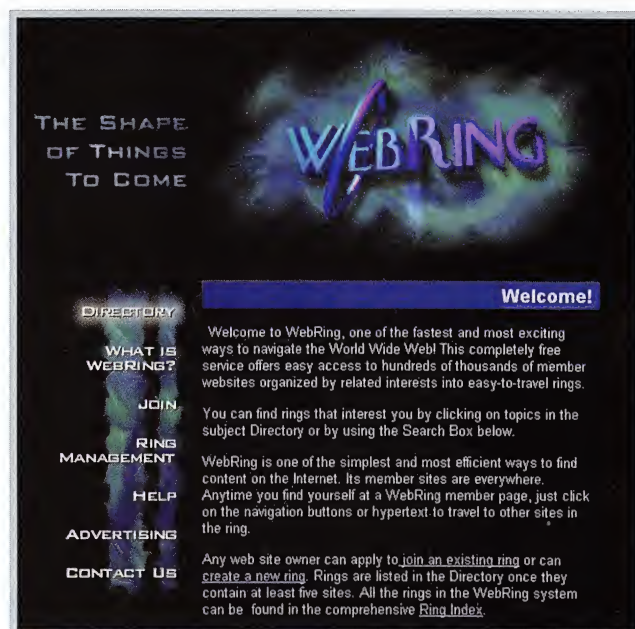
Step 2: Once your Webring actually exists, go back to the main page of Webring.org and click on "Ring Management". You'll be asked to log in, and then you'll see a page with heaps of options to customise your Webring in any way you choose. Remember, even though you created the Webring, your site is NOT already part of it. To add yourself to your

own Webring, you have to "Submit Site" to add yourself to the queue, and then select "Manage Queue Sites" to actually add yourself. Once you've done that, you're almost there.

Step 3: Now you need people to be able to access your Webring, this requires one of those Webring panels we talked about before. You can make them on your own, though we wouldn't advise it. There are three templates ready to go at <http://www.webring.org/help/ringmasterfaq/example.html>. All you need do is add your own graphics and fill in all the personal details which are clearly pointed out in the HTML code.

Step 4: Now all you have to do is make it possible for people to add themselves to the queue. To do this, go into ring management and get the URL for Submit site. This, unlike most other Ring Management pages, is not Password protected so just add a link to that on your web page and you're away. That's it, all you need do now is find some people to add to your Webring and you're done. If you do have any problems, then simply refer to the Ringmaster FAQ at the main Webring site. I bet you never thought you could be a Ringmaster? Now you're a Ringmaster in the biggest Circus in the world.

Rod Spoonman Campbell



It might seem silly to link sites with mostly the same content together, but you'll be sure of getting all the info

Webring - Create new ring - Step 1

This system allows you to create a new Webring on Webring.org. If you are unfamiliar with exactly what a Webring is and how it works, please take a peek at the document [What is a Webring](#).

Now for the lecture:

Managing your own Webring is not easy. If you have your own web page and want to become involved with Webrings, the easiest way to do so is to join an existing ring. To find a Webring that might be appropriate for your page, take a look at [http://www.webring.org](#), our online catalog of the Webrings.

If you're pretty sure you don't want to join an existing ring, there are a few things that you should keep in mind:

1. Getting a ring started can be time consuming. Finding sites to join, e-mailing them, and convincing them to do so takes time, and can be a bit frustrating.
2. Being a ringmaster/master can be a lot of work, particularly when your ring starts to grow.
3. Creating a good Webring requires a pretty solid understanding and ability to use HTML. If you're just starting out on the web, creating a ring now is probably not the best plan; it would probably be better to first join an existing ring to gain an understanding of how the system works.

Now for the disclaimer:

The Webring is a free service made available to the members of the Internet community. As such, we cannot make any guarantees that the system will perform consistently or reliably, nor can we be held responsible for the ways in which the system is used.

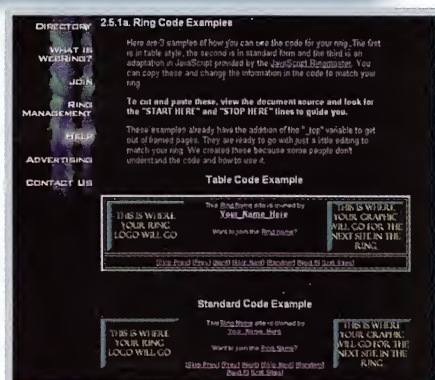
As a general rule, we do not censor rings or ring content, nor do we wish to do so. We do reserve the right, however, to deny service to anyone, and terminate any ring if the system is being abused.

So that's that. If you agree to the above conditions, click "I Agree" below.

[I Agree]

Joining a Ring

How do you become part of a Webring? It's quite simple, all you have to do is find a site which is part of the Webring you're interested in, and click the Join Up link in the Webring Panel, then you fill out the form and you'll be placed in the queue. When the Ringmaster sees fit they will either add you to the ring, or refuse entry. The latter is unlikely, but still possible. But what if your site defies classification? What if there



your site defies classification? What if there

Net Game News

Australian gamers, online

Welcome to the new Net Game News section of PC PowerPlay. This page has two primary reasons for existing. Firstly, to keep you on the ball of the latest developments in the online gaming scene, and secondly, to reflect the state of play on these services on a month to month basis - things like competitions, tournaments and other such noteworthy events. We'll also point you to where the action is at.

So how do I become a part of it and what do I need?

The cheapest and the easiest way is to use the free multiplayer clients that are included with the game in question. Other than being free, these are painless to set up and only require your existing ISP for connection. On the down side though, there are few games to choose from (at this stage only Blizzard and Westwood games, but more are coming) and internet lag can really slow the game down, almost to a state of no play - perhaps the greatest reason for a bad experience. Being free, you also have to put up with all those hoboos and drifters whose primary function seems to be getting in the way of a decent, fair match.

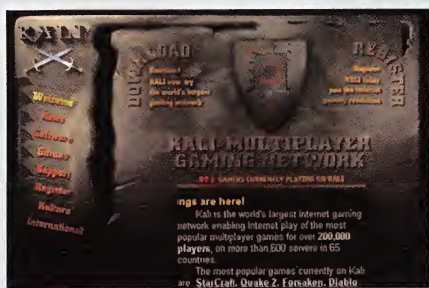
Then there's the subscription based providers. While these charge a monthly fee for usage, there's a much larger range of games supported, the connection is generally of a very high standard, and since it requires the exchange of monies, a higher serious gamer to little shit gamer ratio than any other service.

Both types however provide the following - an arena in which users can chat and set up games, ranking and ladder tables, and of course a means by which to play someone in the game of choice using a modem. In most cases clients for these services are located on game software or can be downloaded from the respective web sites.

Kali

www.kali.net
US\$20

Kali supports just about every multiplayer game devised, and you're guaranteed an opponent no matter what time of day you log on.



This is because Kali calls for just a one-off payment of US\$20 for registration and as a result has attracted a huge user base from all over the world. Comprehensive, vast and attractive - internet lag keeps Kali one for occasions.

Battle.net

www.battle.net
Free

Blizzard set up Battle.net so that users could play Diablo against each other for nada. Now the service supports Warcraft 2 and Starcraft, and similarly attracts a multitude of players. Be prepared to handle lag and put up with younger players.

Westwood Online

www.westwood.com
Free

The Westwood equivalent of Battle.net, known previously as Westwood Chat. Supports Command & Conquer, C&C Red Alert, C&C Sole Survivor and Monopoly. Upon



a recent visit, I happened across many channels with names such as "Teenage_Pool_Party" and "Flirt_4_U". Makes finding the serious players a little harder.

Activision's ActivLink

www.activision.com
Will be free

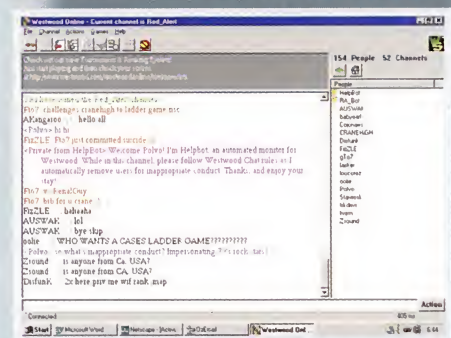
The recently announced answer to

Battlenet and Westwood Online. It will support Activision games only (nice pick though). Although mentioned way back in issue #24, there is still no further news nor web updates regarding when we'll be able to take part in it.

Multiplay

www.multiplay.com.au
Affordable

The more established local subscription based service. To connect,



download the client then launch it after logging on with your existing ISP. With dedicated servers, truly magical experiences in low-lag-loving games like Quake are possible. Supports a large range of games with more coming.

Wireplay

www.wireplay.com.au
Affordable

The new cat on the block with impressive muscle (the Telstra backing). Using a dial in method of connection, users run the client and dial into the Wireplay network much like you'd dial into your ISP. Has the greatest number of games supported and likewise a great platform for low lag multiplayer.

March Stepnik

WEBSTALK

Welcome to the home of strange web pages. Alert us to your favourite site and we'll tell the world. And give you credit too, mmmm credit...

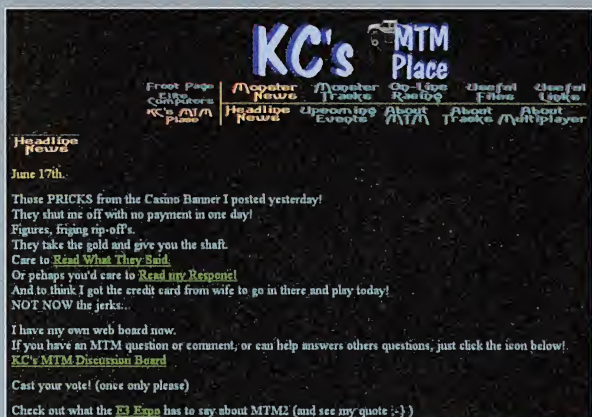
KC's MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS PAGE

<http://www.vales.com/monster.html>

This site is fantastic! KC's MTM page can single handedly quadruple your MTM playing time, simply because of the massive number of new trucks, tracks and editors you can play around with. There are obviously some very dedicated gamers out there, because some of the tracks are simply brilliant. Everyone got bored with MTM fairly quickly due to there only being 8 playable tracks, but now there are hundreds waiting for download. Don't hesitate going to this site if you liked Monster Truck Madness. One of the best.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★



DOWNLOAD.COM

<http://www.download.com>

A site that we have somehow missed until now, a fantastic place for everything you'd want to download. Not a totally games related site, but one which does have its fair share of gaming delights for you to behold. It's good because it's easy to find everything and especially good for Australians since you can get very fast download speeds because you'd generally be accessing it when all our friends across the Pacific are asleep. A wonderful resource for gamers and non gamers alike.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★



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PLANET QUAKE

<http://www.planetquake.com>

This month's obligatory Quake site is somewhat different to your general news site. Taking what could only be described as a more cultured look at the entire Quake environment, they seem to have produced a sort of web Tabloid devoted to Quaking; not an easy task. So, while you're searching for info, you're also having a good read as well. Planet Quake also hosts a lot of sites including some of the finest Quake 2 map sites to be found. We recommend Planet Quake as your starting point, especially when looking for Capture the Flag maps. Its only problem is that it can be a little difficult to find what you're

looking for when first visiting.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★



RIOT.COM.AU

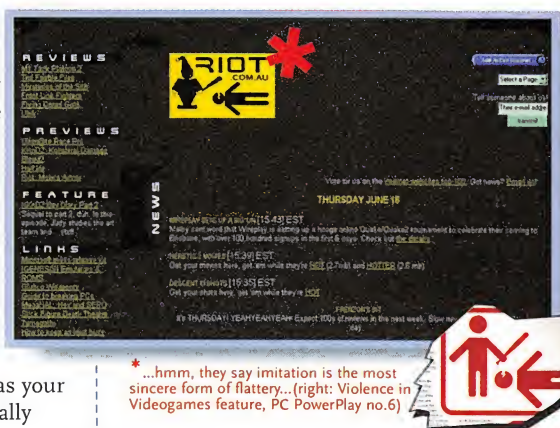
<http://riot.com.au>

The only way to describe this site is news with flavour. Although it doesn't cover everything, it is generally done in an interesting way and has very cool features. The site is very easy to navigate, and everything

about it is very professional. It also gets the thumbs up for being humorous, you could even say a bit oddball, but that would be nasty. As you've probably guessed, it's Australian as well and it only loses on the content because it doesn't update as often as some other sites.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★



*...hmm, they say imitation is the most sincere form of flattery... (right: Violence in Videogames feature, PC PowerPlay no.6)

HYPER@CTIVE

<http://www.hyperactive.com.au>

Ok, so this is a bit of a plug for ourselves, but we just thought we'd remind

you that Next Media's very own Hyper@ctive is the premier news site around. In it you'll find reviews, previews, heaps of cheats and much, much more. In fact, it now also includes a Quake 2 clan "yellow pages" (well they're all yellow aren't they?) We won't give it a score, because we would be biased and we couldn't have that! We will tell you though that the site is under the tutelage of mastermind Eddie Dawson. Good job man, love your work.

Rod Spoonman Campbell
spoonman@next.com.au





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#4 PC buyers guide, Australian Rugby League, Normality, Spycraft walkthrough.

#5 Net games, Time Commando, Close Combat, Civ 2 strategy guide.

#6 Best and worst games of all time, Quake, Pandora Directive, Flight sim roundup.

#7 Violence in games, Mechwarrior Mercenaries, Krush Kill 'n Destroy, MMX Pentiums

#8 Making of a Game, Video Card feature, C&C Red Alert, Privateer 2.

#9 Red Alert Feature, Alphaworld, Wavetable soundcards, Tomb Raider, Syndicate Wars.

#10 New Star Wars games, 3D accelerators compared, DIY Upgrade guide, Discworld 2

#11 Diablo, Interstate '76, MMX Pentiums examined, Build your own PC and network, Dark Reign.

#12 MDK, Quake Mission Packs, Huge Joystick guide, Internet Newsgroups, Ecstasia 2.

#13 Need for Speed II, X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter, Quake addons, PCs versus Consoles debate, Online game hackers.

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#17 Age of Empires, 500MHz Pentiums, Starfleet Academy, Beam Software, Software Piracy

#18 Jedi Knight, Total Annihilation, Hexen II, Quake addon megaguide

#19 Blade Runner, Tomb Raider 2, AFL '98, 3D CPUs, Quake 2 first look

#20 TOCA Touring Cars, Heavy Gear, FIFA '98, Next-Gen 3D cards, Dark Reign Playguide Pt.1

#21 Quake II, Intel's EPIC new CPU, I-War, Monkey Island 3, Multi vs Single player gaming debate, Dark Reign Playguide Pt.2

#22 Battlezone, 1GHz hot chips, Ultima Online Chronology & Tour guide, Starcraft Beta, Unreal, Quake 2 playguide

#23 Forsaken preview, Obsidian 3Dfx cards, i740 3D accelerators, Adventure, games, Red Baron II

#24 Tiberian Sun preview, Voodoo II cards benchmarked, Blade Runner playguide, Rebellion, Incoming

#25 Starcraft, Forsaken, Motherboard Benchtest, Lifestyle of a True Gamer, Virtual Reality, Soccer Games

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WIN A 32 BIT PCI SOUND CARD!

The InnoVision Letter of the Month wins the new LEAF 32 bit/3D sound card, using the Maestro ESS Wavetable chipset. PCI 32 bit sound leaves old ISA Sound Blaster technology for dead, freeing your CPU for faster gameplay. Valued at \$199, ph InnoVision on 03 58318833 for more info, or visit www.innovision.com.au.



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Postal: Worst Game Of The Year?

I am writing, sickened by what I have seen: Postal. I managed to play it on a friend's machine, and I swear I will not play it again. I am naturally subjective; I do not judge something I have not played, but after playing Postal and killing my first citizen, I have passed judgement on Postal. This game is sick. How Running With Scissors and Ripcord expect it to sell, I cannot imagine. Quake and Quake 2 push the boundary of acceptable game violence and gore (the Processing Plant [Q2]) comes to mind, but Postal not only steps over the line, it leaves a bloody trail behind. Running With Scissors, how about some decent graphics and a half-playable game, what a pathetic game from a pathetic company.

Evan Clarke
Internet

Bathurst Sim please...

I can't believe the amount of people writing in and asking for software companies to make a decent Bathurst simulation. Don't people in the software industry who make games read magazines that review games, so they can find out what the public want?

Can you imagine how great it could be, they could design it so

you could race back in the days of the little XU1 Torana's and GTHO Falcons right up to the current Commodores and Falcons.

Hhhmmmm.

Glenn Ellis
Gold Coast, Qld

And another thing!

I am writing to you to bitch about people bitching (yes, I know how stupid this sounds). Reading over my past issues of this most holy of tomes I am amused at how many of the letters are just people bitching about one thing or another.

Here are the top 7 most bitched about issues:

7. Violence in games: I personally have a hard time imagining how anyone can be affected by computer game violence. But that's just me.

6. Windows 95: if you still think this is worth bitching about, then read Kirk Stalnaker's letter in issue 25.

5. Computer game clones: If you dislike them, just remember that most popular games started out as clones.

4. Cheating: It's the easy way out, but it will always be there.

3. Online manuals: I agree with all you first class bitches out there, these suck.

2. Piracy: This raises game prices, and that's not good.

And number one, the most bitched about issue in PCPP since its conception, Aussie Censorship! Yes, that's right, no censorship is good censorship (in my opinion anyway).

The great Quake debate is also a majorly bitched about topic, but after the first 10 letters, I just stopped counting. The only good letter in the Quake debate was Rod 'Spoonman' Campbell's letter of the month in issue 15. Yes, that's right, before stardom in issue 18 Freak of the Month. Good job man.

TombStone
Internet

Babble on

I've noticed previously that your Setup guy Ashton calls his C-Drive "Agammemnon", but I think that "Churchill" and "Blackstar" are taking it just way too far. What are the other two called? Roanoke? Prometheus? Whitestar? Clarkestown? Gee, and my friends tell me I need to get out more!

Trent Yarwood
Internet

INNOVISION LETTER OF THE MONTH

Multiplayer Revelation

I remember how great a strategist I thought I was back in the days when I had never played a human opponent. A friend who had played multiplayer before challenged me to a game of Command and Conquer. I was so sure I would crush him with my well honed skills and was still in a state of shock when he won the 10th straight game in a row. IT WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT GAME! No more could I set up defence at the front of my base and watch the enemy army get shredded to bits over and over. The word flanks soon entered my strategy book along with, the rear, and diversionary tactics.

I say as far as strategy games go the single player missions are almost dead and there is little need to revive them. Of course skirmish mode should always be supported for the occasional bash against the computer and for trying out new tactics. Perhaps in the future we might see these games come out as multiplayer only with future expansion packs for campaign missions for those who want them. Finally, the Internet is here boys, get wired and really try out your skills against an opponent that thinks and actually cares when you drop a nuclear bomb on his base!

Kiwijoe
New Zealand

Co-Op, I like!

Consumers and software companies alike are neglecting just how much fun there is in teamplay games. I'm sure many gamers will remember the entertainment value of games like Wizard of Wor and Gauntlet on the C64 and Golden Axe and Double Dragon II on the Amiga when played in glorious two-player mode. Last year my computer studies teacher was nice enough to let my classmates and I finish off year 12 by playing Quake on my school's LAN, and after deathmatching for hours we decided to try a co-operative game. I can guarantee that the feeling of running across a room containing two Shamblers whilst three friends provide cover fire is one of the biggest rushes anyone's going to get from a computer game. Some more recent games, (namely Doom, Quake/Quake 2 and Diablo) have implemented co-operative play quite successfully, (Capture the Flag especially springs to mind). But I believe that teamplay is still largely an untapped concept.

Even as I read the review of Die by the Sword in the June PowerPlay, I see that there is no co-op play included, when I could think of nothing cooler than exploring dungeons and lopping limbs off the undead with the help of a sword-wielding friend.

Surely it's time for developers to start to think about including quality teamplay options in their games.

Teamplay in modern games simply has so much potential and with a bit of time and imagination on the part of developers, co-operative play could become a big factor in the world of multiplayer gaming.

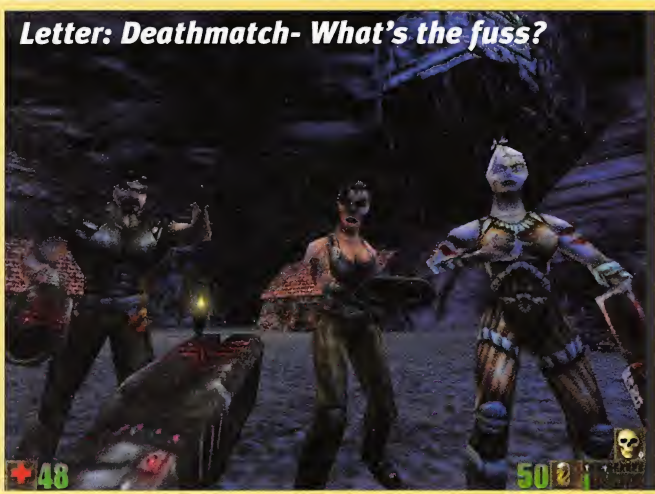
Jim Stewart
Internet

What were we thinking!

After reading your review in issue #25 of Starcraft I was extremely disappointed with the mark that you gave it. In the review you praise the game with its immersive story line and the beautiful graphics (despite the game still using dated 2D sprites, ie the 2D sprites did not detract from the game's awesomeness). The only criticism that you came up with was the rather large interface bar but I question whether this is worth 8%. Total Annihilation was a superb game and because I loved it so much along with Starcraft, I am forced to compare your scores.

Firstly, multiplayer aspects of the two games should not cloud this argument as they both are reasonably the same, although Battle.Net does sway the favour towards Starcraft. If we really look closely then, the pluses of each game must be compared, ie the 3D engine and downloadable units (ie replayability factor) of TA vs the story line and the 3 diverse races of Starcraft. If we assume that the argument will come down to this, you at PC PowerPlay

Letter: Deathmatch- What's the fuss?



would prefer pretty graphics over an immersive story. I am not taking anything away from TA's story line or Starcraft's beauty, but this is what it really comes down to. I am afraid PC PowerPlay, you have let us, the faithful readers of your magazine, down with your very low score for a game that has "revolutionised the RTS genre". We all have our opinions, but I feel that you have a responsibility to the readers of PCP to give games high marks that deserve them. I agreed with your score of 98% for TA and if Starcraft is a game that is 6% less than TA then I know that all of your reviews must now be taken lightly. Actually, come to think of it, what you are saying by giving Starcraft 92% is that Red Alert is a better game.

Nathan Baltoski
Internet

The old scoring dilemma again... It's like this: A game is scored based on the overall quality of the game, the experience and other factors (graphics, sound etc.), but also where it sits in comparison to other similar games - and here's the important bit; at the time of its release.

We have two options when scoring 1: Factor in every past review we've ever done - this would result in awarding artificial scores based on what other games got in the past, and when we're dealing with games in the 90% range, changing a score 1 or 2% so it compares with a game reviewed over 2 years ago would result in a score which doesn't reflect the quality of the actual game in question. 2: We rate a game based on its quality at the time of reviewing. Standards are always changing and while we do consider recently awarded scores for similar games, we aren't going back 2 - 3 years to nigger over 1% here or there. We score based on the latter. Starcraft, we feel, is simply a 92% game.

Deathmatch - What's the fuss?

I got hold of a copy of Quake 2 last month and have been playing through it in single player mode since, and it's great. I mean, it's still just Doom with flash graphics, but there you go. Anyway, I decided to break the habits of the last year and give this whole Deathmatch thing on the net a go. So I did (all action, me). Now, maybe I'm just thicker than Thicker the Thick guy, but I'm sad to report that I just don't get it. I reckon I'm pretty good at single player, but I tried 3 different servers in 3 different countries and I never lasted more than about a minute. From what I can tell, the whole game consists of running round like a mad bastard, frantically trying to find a weapon, only to get picked off by some wingnut with a rocketlauncher hiding on a ledge who finishes up with the brilliant and incisive taunt 'haha you suck'. The only good part is that he in turn is melted by a guy with a BFG seconds later, but the moment is tinged with bittersweet sadness, really. Overall, about 20 minutes was enough and then I was bored silly with the whole thing. Even if we put the practicalities of internet connections and lag (and low skill levels on my part) aside for a moment, the aim of the game is pretty much to waste everybody, yes? Now, I am going to get flamed for sounding like some Moral High Priest, but I reckon that's just a shade tragic, really. People play games mainly so they can do stuff they can't do in real life, so it seems to me that if your fantasy is to run round and kill everybody you see (repeatedly) as fast as you can, then have you con-

sidered:

1. A career in the postal service, and 2. Just how sad that really is?

Now for some good news: I played Q2 in co-op mode for the first time last weekend with a mate of mine via modem. And no, that's not the good news, rather the fact that it was top fun was. Same game, same guns, same monsters, but the whole team element thing was what really made it for me. Just a touchy feely kind of guy I guess, but working together was the best part. Oh, and occasionally shooting my mate due to lag too, that was pretty cool fun as well.

So that brings me back to Deathmatch. I have yet to figure out this whole CTF or Teamfortress thing and have a lash at them, as they sound better, but plain vanilla Deathmatch? What's the point?

Brett Taylor
Internet

It's a basic, primal, survival thing. And it's really good fun. Plus, as you've discovered, Deathmatch is also very difficult, which makes players work hard at improving their skills - another reason to play. There does come a time, for many of us, when Deathmatching becomes dull and simplistic. Trust us, you'll love CTF and Team Fortress! As for Co-op play, yes and absolutely, it rocks. See the letter above "Co-op, I like!" for another slant.

3LA (Three Letter Acronym)

I have been continually fascinated over the quantum leaps in performance in 3D accelerators and the bold statements declaring that (in certainly a gamers perspective) we are in the "3D Accelerator Age".

My concern is that, if Australia is (or certainly purports) to be the "clever country" we seem to be woefully inadequate in the production of good 3D cards.

Well, to get the ball rolling to inspire Good Ole Aussie Know How, I have some suggestions that will hopefully get some creative juices flowing by using the principles of lateral thinking.

Why not come up with a few names for some really good processes that totally confuse and mystify the average person in the street (ie like the adverts for any video card) and then create the technology to put into a 3D accelerator that will make a Voodoo 2 look like cave paintings.

For example:

Pixel Mip Strobing: PMS.
Palletised Ovoid Quelching: POQ.
Spiral Iridescent Full Flow
Yeanling: Spiffy.
Whole Octilinear Warping: WOW.
Dynamic Orbital Helixing: DOH.
Counterlinear Re-energised Arc Processing: CRAP.
Translucent Secondary Hazing: TRASH.

Just think of the sales patois that can be used by over exuberant sales persons that can even more totally confuse computer buyers.

"This baby has video you won't believe, it has a WOW factor of 71.1 and the most SPIFFY translucency any game will ever need. It's also complete TRASH and CRAP.DOH!"

I am sure that Australia could really come up with the goods on this one... Come on Aussie!

M. Worthington
Bassendean, WA

WINDOWS 95

In PCPP # 25 we published reader Kirk Stalnaker's letter about Win 95 and Microsoft in general. Being the favourite argument topic for most PC users, we expected a healthy response. To put it mildly, we were inundated. Here are the letters we liked best:

Kirk, I'm 42 years old and I hope that when I grow up I don't sound like you. You sound like my grandfather, forever complaining about how we never had it so good, how back in the Depression they ate grass so we shouldn't complain about an underdone steak at a restaurant.

Crap. I buy a steak, I expect a good steak, not a lump of raw meat and a "well it could have been grass, so shut up and eat it" from the chef. I am not at all thankful that things aren't what they could have been and I'm annoyed at what I am expected to put up with. Happy consumers don't complain. If I buy a \$3000 setup I expect it to work properly and not crash every day for no apparent reason. Apples can run for a week and not crash once, why can't wonderful Windows. So yeah, I think there is a reasonable case to make a complaint.

Imagine the PC without Windows 95. Hell I've seen it, in fact I use it on another partition on this machine. It's called OS/2. Or it could have been GEOS or some highly advanced form of UNIX with a GUI or any one of half a dozen other PC OS's that

were developed and disappeared with the overwhelming success of Windows. I do use W95 regularly at work and at home because there are some specialist programs and most games that are not available for the OS/2 platform. I use OS/2 in preference because it is a better OS than Windows. Bill Gates thought so until he realized that he could make more \$ without IBM and pulled out of the joint development to have a go at Windows.

Kirk, there was nothing inevitable about Windows. Other OS's were available all along and these would have been developed as necessary. Hell they were developed and a lot of them were fully backward compatible with DOS and fully 16 bit (now 32 bit). Remember, IBM's first choice as the PC's initial OS was C/PM and it was bad timing by its developer that put IBM onto Bill Gates. Gates and Allen might have gone on to do something but probably not what they have achieved.

And yeah, maybe it would have been Apple who dominated. No one minds domination. It can give a lead to an industry. Monopoly is something less desirable. Monopolies tend to be slow, bloated and risk averse. They don't develop more than they have to. Whatever you believe, you better believe that Windows was developed because Apple and IBM were aiming at replacing DOS with a GUI based OS and Bill didn't want to be left behind.

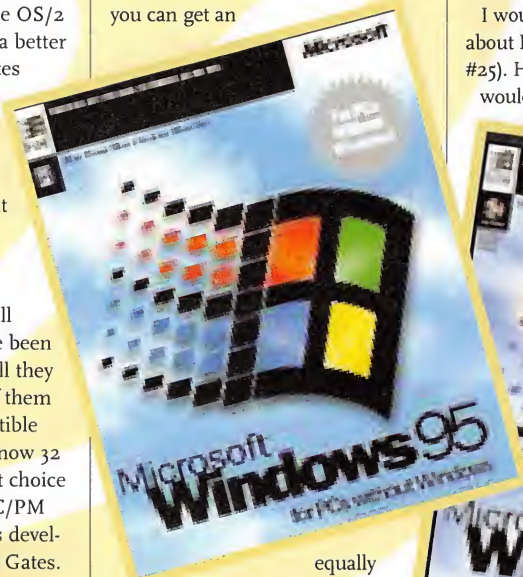
Brendan Eales
Internet

This is a letter in reply to the one in June's Issue titled "Microsoft Rule". I think PCPP readers are only getting one side of the story. Sure DirectX is brilliant, BUT it is about the only good thing to come out of Microsoft. I think there are two problems with Microsoft. One, their programs are TOO buggy. Two, their prices are TOO high.

Ok, lets start with the buggy aspect of Microsoft. When Win95 was released it had over 300 "undocumented features" (bugs). Even after all these patches and updates have been released there are still a whole lot of bugs. Now they have unleashed Win98 with its "undocumented features". There is also something wrong about the way Microsoft uses the public as beta testers. The public is

not meant for testing new apps and games. We are here as users, not guinea pigs.

The cost of Microsoft products is another thing. Microsoft Office costs around \$600, but you can get an



equally good package for \$50 to \$60. Microsoft's stronghold of the software market is too great. Microsoft will come up with a product, then look who has a better version of the same thing and buy them off. I don't see a big problem if there wasn't any Windows 95, NT etc. I used to love DOS but Linux makes DOS look like dog's poo. Linux can be set up in the same way as Windows, where you don't have to enter IRQ settings and so on. And the best part about Linux is it is free. Support for linux is growing very rapidly. Linux was designed by thousands of programmers around the world and is still being added to. For more info on Linux goto <http://www.linux.org>. I am sure someone will come up with something similar to DirectX for Linux.

Oh well that's my opinion. If builders built houses the way programmers program, the first woodpecker that came along would knock out civilization. Good peripherals and software would not exist. How would many businesses cope without Microsoft Office? Where would many people be without Windows and DOS? I have read many letters in your magazine sledging Microsoft. Sure, maybe Bill Gates does have a bit too much money, but isn't that everyone's dream? People only hate him and Microsoft because they are jealous! So next time you feel like sledging Microsoft, just stop and think, "Where would I be without all the wonderful

Microsoft products". I am also a proud user of a Sidewinder 3D Pro and a MS Home Mouse.

Sugen Ganess
Internet

I would first like to comment about Kirk Stalnaker's letter (issue #25). He talks about how the world would be without Windows 95.

Well I think



that when most Microsoft lovers debate that it's a good operating system against the Microsoft haters they get it all wrong. They say it has a better interface than DOS, which it is. But that's not what the haters are complaining about. It's not the interface. It's because it's so buggy. I mean look at the latest version number : 4.00.950 B. Now that's a lot of patches. I must admit that Windows 95 is a good operating system. The interface is simple and you don't need to know much about the computer to fully use it. Making the 'newbies' 'techies' quicker. People who complained about Windows 95 when it first came out were people who were scared of change. Which almost everyone fears. Also with DOS you don't need to have extensive knowledge about IRQs and DMAs, you just need to know the numbers. But the latest DOS setup programs mostly for games are fully automatic. I mean, take Quake for example. It doesn't even have a setup program!! You never get many General Protection faults, Page faults or driver errors in DOS much do you? Practically never!! Maybe an EMM386 error once every 6 months that about it. Go into your Windows directory and look how much it takes up, including subdirectories. Mine's 170MB!! Now look at DOS. It can fit onto one disk. All those internet cache files, that history folder,

the temporary documents, the swap files, the backgrounds, the sound files, the little programs such as Explorer, Sound recorder and all that other crap. You never get those things with DOS now do you? I reckon if Microsoft had made DOS and Windows 95 co-exist nicely instead of replacing DOS then it would never of enraged all of those anti-Microsoft people. Also, if all of the anti-Microsoft people are

'newbies'. Then how do they know how to create a web page, upload, update and do heaps of neat things such as make entire games like Pie Bill then? They are actually quite smart. I mean did you know that Bill Gates' full name is William Henry Gates the 3rd? And if you get the ascii values of his name, 66 + 73 + 76 + 76 + 71 + 65 + 84 + 69 + 83 + 3 = 666! Did you know that, the same can be done with 'MS-DOS sp 6.21' and 'Windows 96' which might be why they skipped that number.

Michael Galos
Internet

As a person always ready to rise to a suitable troll, I feel I must comment on Kirk Stalnaker's letter in June's PC Powerplay (issue 25).

Mr Stalnaker is a fine example of the generation we are breeding; totally ignorant of any OS except Windows, and honestly thinking that Windows is a great OS. While Windows generally does its job reasonably well, it is not the only operating system on the planet (yet) and it only ranks (IMHO) a 6 out of 10 as an OS. There are a number of other operating systems out there that are far more intelligently put together than the much kludged Windows95, just one example being Microsoft's own Windows NT.

If Windows95 was perfection in an OS, it would have proper multi-tasking, proper SMP support, proper memory protection, proper Plug'n'Play, and proper OS level support for the hardware it grudgingly does recognise. It would also do this without filling my hard disk with "shared" software libraries that cannot be shared.

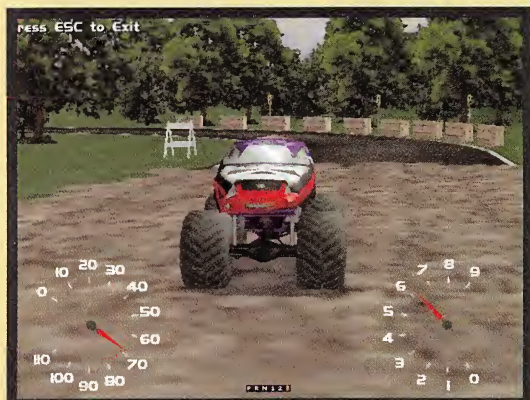
Finally, the likes of DirectX and Plug'n'Play are patches for problems that never should have occurred in the first place. A great OS? I'd suggest BeOS.

Antti Roppola

P.S. I hope the ensuing flame war is toasty warm and enjoyable.

COMPETITIONS

OUTWARS & MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2



Microsoft know games. They tell us. Repeatedly. We now wake up chanting this new gaming mantra, so it's probably true. To celebrate this new era in gaming we are proud to announce the following competition: 10 copies of Outwars (cool 3rd person action game - Lara in a spacesuit in the future, but a bloke instead), and 10 copies of Monster Truck Madness 2 (luridly painted utes with tyres bigger than your house, bouncing around a track and into each other, has funny nickname here at the office).

They're both top games, as 10 lucky lucky winners will discover. Each gets one of each, simple eh?

Q. Name four countries that share the same name as their capital city.

WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope.

All entries close July 23, 1997

Entries to:

PC PowerPlay,

78 Renwick st.

Redfern NSW 2016

Issue # 25 winners

VOODOO 2 + GAMES

ANSWER: ANTI-ALIASING

1st: R. McAlpine-Scarborough, QLD.

Rnrs Up: C. Price-Ningi, QLD.

B. Liang-Marrickville, NSW.

R. Johnson-Nth Canterbury, NZ.

S. Moore-Wellington, NZ.

S. Seaton-Belrose, NSW.

S. Laba-Greenvale, VIC.

R. Fraser-Oakleigh South, VIC.

S. Struthers-Ferny Hills, QLD.

B. Attwater-Piller Valley, NSW.

DIE BY THE SWORD

ANSWER: EXCALIBUR

M. Massimi-Morwell, VIC.

D. Roberts-Granton, TAS.

D. Mratovich-Ocean Reef, WA.

A. Abbott-Sale, VIC.

T. Facius-Northcliff, WA.

D. Lovell-Riverwood, NSW.

STARCRAFT

ANSWER: 17

W. KAKOSCHKE-CRAIGMORE, SA.

J. MACLAREN-MORISSET, NSW.

P. KALINIC-WAKELEY, NSW.

A. BOURNE-WESTLAKE, QLD.

D. EVANS-WALLSEND, NSW.

L. JANE-EAST KEILOR, VIC.

FORSAKEN

ANSWER: A PERSON WHO EXPLORES CAVES AS A HOBBY.

M. Lee-Nambour, QLD.

D. Sanders-Maryborough, QLD.

S. Chan-Templestone, VIC.

A. Burdeniuk-Findon, SA.

J. Sun Kim-Lyons, ACT.

B. Domeyer-Burnie, TAS.

VOODOO 2

ANSWER: SCAN LINE

INTERLEAVED

S. Cameron-Quinn's rocks, WA.

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F22 Air Dominance Fighter

Actua Golf 2

Forsaken

Sid Meier's Gettysburg

Quake 2

PSST... WANNA SEE MASSIVE ATTACK?

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About Wireplay

Q. The original infrastructure of today's internet was designed by the U.S. Military as a communications system able to survive nuclear war. What was it called?

FLASHBACK

(No, really, that's what the games called!)

Delphine

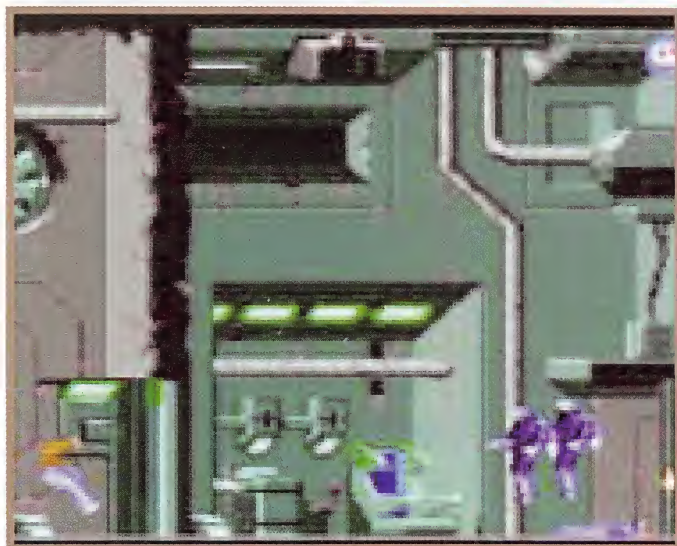
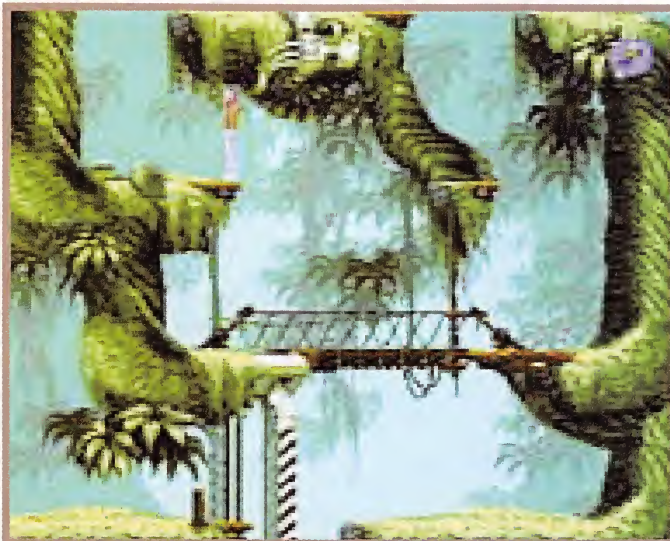
Year: 1993

Reqs: 386SX/25, 2Mb RAM, VGA

In anticipation of the long-awaited, and now finally forthcoming it seems, Heart Of Darkness (we're hoping to review it this month, but at the time of writing this it hadn't shown up yet - my fingers are staying crossed) I thought I'd check out the game that is obviously its spiritual ancestor.

Actually, there's more to it than that. In 1992, Eric Chahi created a spectacular action/adventure by the name of Another World, which almost single-handedly introduced the word "cinematic" to the gaming lexicon. Soon after Eric left to begin work on - yes - Heart Of Darkness. Flushed by the success of his game, however, its publisher Delphine was keen for a sequel. And so Flashback was born - as a sequel (of sorts) to Another World.

Why only a sequel of sorts? Well, although Flashback used similar rotoscoping technology to produce its impressively animated characters, the gameplay had greater platformer leanings than did its predecessor. Essentially, Another World was a platformer designed so as not to look like a platformer. Yet with its clearly delineated multi-level screens and strict layout, Flashback



Conrad Hart, one of the last heroes of the all-but-forgotten 2D platformer genre. Great name, too

couldn't hide its heritage.

Nonetheless it was never really a platformer in the traditional sense. Departure from this tradition was evident in the strong plot that propelled you through the game's five worlds. It was full of clever puzzles as well, with security systems to negotiate, bizarre future TV shows to investigate, and plenty of minor characters to chat with along the way. Playing it again over the last couple of



days I'm constantly reminded of the underrated Abe's Odyssey, one of the few games today carrying the flag for intelligent platformers.

Comparisons with Prince Of Persia were aired at the time of its release, and even I'd find it hard to argue with that. As long as you replace the swordfighting with laser gases and forcefields, and the guillotines with toxic gases and forcefields, and the dashing turban-wearing henchmen with all kinds of disgustingly mutated aliens. Undoubtedly it was the quality of the animation that prompted such comparisons. Rotoscoping allows for a fluidity and realism of movement that even now polygons can only dream of - I wish more games would utilise the technique.

Flashback's hero, the curiously-named Conrad Hart (are we to read anything into the similarity with Joseph Conrad's Heart Of Darkness?), was the spitting image of the protagonist in Another World. And yet, apparently, they are completely different people - another reason why this was only a sequel of sorts. Conrad later appeared in the incredible Fade To Black, the sequel to Flashback, but I'll save that for examination in a future issue.

Flashback belongs to a genre (that of the 2D platformer) that no one takes seriously any more. Aside from the regular banal kiddies title and the very occasional gem like Abe's Odyssey, they've been abandoned in favour of 3D action. And yet, Flashback is a reminder of how great this genre once was.

David Wildgoose

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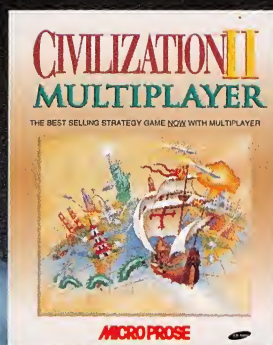
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